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THE

WORKS

OF

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT PAISLEY, AND LATE PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE, IN NEW JERSEY.

CONTAINING

ESSAYS, SERMONS, &c.

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE AND ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE, AND TO POINT OUT ITS INFLUENCE ON HOLINESS OF LIFE.

TOGETHER WITH HIS

LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ELOQUENCE AND DIVINITY;

HIS SPEECHES IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS;

AND MANY OTHER VALUABLE PIECES, NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY.

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SERMONS

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

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VOL. III.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following sermons are published just in the manner in which they were delivered at home; from which circumstance, if they suffer in some respects, they will have this advantage, that they will appear the plain and artless expression of a minister's concern for his people, and not in the least intended to increase the reputation of their author. Perhaps also, not having undergone any change, they will be little less either acceptable or useful to those for whose instruction they were first prepared, and at whose request they are now published. I have only further to say, that my present removal from this part of the world, has, in a great measure, delivered me from the nicety of publication, and made me willing to speak, while absent, and continue to instruct those whom it is so much my duty to love and serve.

J. W.

PAISLEY,
16th May 1768.

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ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD.

PROV. xviii. 10.

The NAME of the LORD is a ſtrong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.

THIS book of Proverbs conſiſts almoſt entirely of obſervations upon human life. The characters and purſuits of men are deſcribed in it with a ſtrength and propriety, which was never exceeded by thoſe who devoted their whole attention to the ſtudy of what is called the knowledge of the world and of mankind. But in one particular it differs from, and excels all human learning, that it never ſeparates the knowledge of the world from the knowledge of him who made and who governs it. There we are taught to improve the leſſons we receive in the courſe of providence, for leading us to obedience and ſubmiſſion to him, "who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doſt thou?" There, while a view is given us of the innumerable paths which men have

ſtruck out for themſelves in travelling through life, our eyes are continually directed to the paths of righteouſneſs, the ſure and only way to reſt and peace.

Experience alone, and unaſſiſted, will make us wiſer in one ſenſe, will ſhew us many of the unavoidable calamities of life; but the greateſt exertion of human reaſon could never yet lead to an effectual cure. I believe it will be found, that perſons of the greateſt vigour and reſolution of mind, when they truſted to their own internal ſtrength, and ſought a reſource in themſelves for the evils with which they were aſſaulted, have often run headlong into the moſt furious and deſperate courſes, as ſome of the ſtrongeſt animals, when taken in a ſnare, do by their violent ſtruggles, intangle themſelves the more, drawing the cords which bind them ſtill more ſtrait, and increaſe their confinement by their endeavours to eſcape.

The wiſe man, in our text, points out what is the refuge and ſecurity of every child of God. *The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* And he certainly intends to ſet this in oppoſition to every thing elſe in which worldly men might place their dependence; for he adds, as an example, in the verſe following the text, "The rich man's wealth is his ſtrong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." The truth conveyed to us in this paſſage has an intimate connexion with practical and experimental religion; and on a firm belief and habitual application of it, in a great meaſure, depends the comfort and peace of the ſervants of God. In diſcourſing on it, I ſhall endeavour, in divine ſtrength,

I. To explain what is to be underſtood by *the* NAME *of the* LORD.

II. What is implied in the *righteous running into it as a ſtrong tower.*

III. Point out the ſecurity they attain by doing ſo.

And, in the laſt place, I ſhall make ſome application of the ſubject.

I. Then, I am to explain what is to be underſtood by *the* NAME *of the* LORD. And here, I hope, I need ſcarce obſerve, that it was by no means the intention of the Spirit of God, by this expreſſion, to teach us to conceive any particular virtue or charm in the name literally ſo called; that is, the ſound or pronunciation of the word. To imagine any thing of this kind, would be to go into the foolery and idle dreams of ſuperſtition, to which there is not the leaſt countenance given in the holy ſcriptures. Human nature ſeems, however, to have been very prone to this in every age. The uſe of amulets and charms ſeems to have prevailed in the greateſt part of the heathen nations, as alſo magical incantations. Though it did not exert itſelf preciſely in the ſame way, the principle ſeems to have been the ſame, which led the Jews, from a pretended veneration for the name *Jehovah*, never to pronounce it at all; a cuſtom which they retain to this day, alleging, either that they cannot pronounce it, or that it is unlawful to utter it. We may alſo obſerve, that, in our neighbour church *, they ſeem to have fallen into the ſame error in the cuſtom of bowing at the name of Jeſus, while they do not bow to the names of Chriſt, Lord, or God.

* The Church of England. EDIT.

Having mentioned theſe things for the illuſtration of the ſubject before us, I cannot help obſerving, that if a ſuperſtitious veneration for the letters or the ſound of a name is blame-worthy, a raſh profanation of the name of God is unſpeakably more criminal. My heart bleeds to think of the commonneſs of this ſin among all ranks, and all ages. What have thoſe parents to anſwer for, who have taught, or who have not reſtrained their children from taking the name of God in vain? This is a ſin little thought of among men, but highly criminal in the ſight of God, and he hath taken to himſelf the work of avenging it: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs who taketh his name in vain."

By the NAME *of the* LORD, in our text, we are to underſtand the Lord God himſelf; his nature as it is diſcovered to us in all his glorious perfections, particularly in his power and goodneſs, to ſave and deliver them that put their truſt in him. In this ſenſe the name of God, or the name of the Lord, is uſed in many paſſages of ſcripture, as Pſal. xx. 1, 5, 7, verſes, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. We will rejoice in thy ſalvation, and in the name of our God we will ſet up our banners:—Some truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." As alſo in all thoſe places where mention is made of calling on the name of the Lord, or praiſing the name of the Lord. Agreeably to this, we find, in our Saviour's directory for prayer, the following petition, *Hallowed be thy name.* That is, let God himſelf and his glorious perfections be acknowledged, and a ſuitable re-

gard paid to them, by all without exception. The ſame way of ſpeaking is obſerved with reſpect to Chriſt, Acts iv. 12. "For there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved." That is to ſay, there is no other Saviour, beſides Chriſt, to whom we can flee for deliverance from guilt and miſery. At the ſame time, it is eaſy to ſee the propriety of this expreſſion *the name of the Lord;* it is uſed for God himſelf, becauſe, amongſt mankind, we are diſtinguiſhed from one another by our names, ſo God is known or diſtinguiſhed by the diſcoveries he hath made of himſelf, and the daily exerciſe of his perfections, in behalf of his people.

There are three principal ways by which God hath diſcovered himſelf to mankind; namely, the viſible creation, his written word, and the daily adminiſtration of his providence. Let us conſider them ſhortly, as they may be juſtly ſaid to be his name; for they ſerve to explain his nature.

1. Let us conſider the viſible creation as the name of God. He hath engraven his name on all the works of his hands; he hath engraven it in an univerſal language, in which every intelligent creature may read it, and the moſt weak and ignorant may eaſily comprehend it. Pſal. xix. 1. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-works." Rom. i. 20. "For the inviſible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen; being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

Are men ignorant of God? It is becauſe they do not like to retain him in their knowledge; for the

whole creation is full of him, "He is not far from every one of us." We can no where turn our eyes, to the heavens above, or to the earth below, but we may see the most manifest proofs of his almighty power, his unsearchable wisdom, his unbounded goodness, and his universal presence. How feeling a sense of this does the Psalmist express, Psal cxxxix. 1—7. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—It will fall more properly under the following head to shew how *the righteous run into the name of God as a strong tower*. We now consider only his works, as shewing forth his glory. See, to this purpose, the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the 12th verse and downwards. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord; or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"

2. God hath revealed himſelf in his written word; there he hath clearly and explicitly written his name, and revealed his nature; there all his various perfections, excellent in themſelves and ſuitable to us, are enumerated and explained: in theſe lively oracles, there is a remedy, not for the uncertainty of nature's light, but for the darkneſs of our bewildered underſtandings. Here we muſt not forget that he hath in his word clearly revealed himſelf, as infinitely gracious to ſinners through Jeſus Chriſt. This may well be called his name, becauſe it is the only way by which we are brought to an intereſt in his favour. John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." This unlocks the gates of the ſtrong tower, and opens a ſanctuary to the ſinner, who is fleeing from the ſword of avenging wrath. "No man hath ſeen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the boſom of the Father, he hath declared him." His name and memorial to all generations, is ſaid to "be gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil." And it is in Chriſt Jeſus, and his croſs, that his mercy is diſplayed; it is for Chriſt's ſake that his mercy is beſtowed; it is by Chriſt Jeſus that every mercy is diſpenſed: therefore we may apply to this ſubject, the prophecy of Chriſt in Pſal. xxii. 22. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midſt of the congregation will I praiſe thee."

3. In the laſt place, God reveals his name in the daily adminiſtration of his providence. In this, I include not only what regards the ſupport and preſervation of natural life, but all the methods of his

grace. The one and the other of theſe give us a continual and ſenſible diſplay of the nature and glory of God. What the works of nature teach us to infer by reaſon, what the holy ſcriptures teach us by information concerning God, the adminiſtration of providence gives us an opportunity of ſeeing and feeling in our own experience. The appearances of God in providence, and his gracious interpoſition in behalf of his own people, are expreſſed by his name's being near, or his name's being made great, Pſal. lxxv. 1. "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks; unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare, Pſal. lxxvi. 1. "In Judah is God known, his name is great in Iſrael."

An experimental knowledge of the power and mercy of God, is, of all others, the moſt complete and effectual. To this we may well apply the words of Job, xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes." It is alſo probable, that the Pſalmiſt David often affixes this particular meaning to the knowledge of God's name, as in Pſal. ix. 10. "And they that know thy name will put their truſt in thee; for thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee." For the ſame reaſon he recommends a careful obſervance of providence, as an excellent means of being partakers of divine mercy. Pſal. cvii. 42, 43. "The righteous ſhall ſee it and rejoice, and all iniquity ſhall ſtop her mouth. Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord."

I ſhall conclude this head, by an earneſt exhortation to every one in this aſſembly, to endeavour to underſtand more and more of the name of God, as it appears in his works, in his word, and in his providence. Has he written it in ſo great a variety of characters, and will you not take the pains to obſerve it? O the ſottiſh folly of worldly men! their curioſity is inſatiable to hear things of no moment, while they cannot be perſuaded to hear what regards their own eternal ſtate. They will run in crowds to ſee every idle or pernicious ſight, if it be called rare, while they will not open their eyes on the magnificence and glory of their Creator's works.

But let me, in a particular manner, beg of you, the careful obſervance of divine providence, towards yourſelves in particular. You will find the unſpeakable advantage of it. It will make God more preſent with you than ever. It will ſet home the obligation of every duty, and the enormity of every ſin upon the conſcience, in a manner far more forcible than ever. It will alſo give every mercy a richneſs and value, which it could not derive from any other ſource; juſt as the man who has been fed at a diſtance, by the ſtreams of a prince's bounty, would feel his heart drawn with far ſtronger bonds of love and gratitude, were he to be brought into his preſence, and receive his favours immediately from his own hand.

I am aware of an objection againſt this. Perhaps ſome perſons will ſay, how can I make a particular application of providence? how can I certainly know the voice or meaning of every event that befals my-

ſelf or my family? is there not a great danger of running into viſionary folly and enthuſiaſm? In the remaining part of this ſubject, I ſhall have occaſion to ſay more as to the meaning of providence. In the mean time, let me only deſire you to begin by a perſonal application of the unqueſtionable truths concerning providence, and this will lead you farther than you apprehend, without the leaſt danger of miſtake. Is it not certain, that "a ſparrow falleth not to the ground without your heavenly Father, and that the very hairs of your head are all numbered by him?" Is it not of the Lord's mercy, then, that you awaked this morning, and did not ſleep the ſleep of death? If you had done ſo, were you ready for it? Do you know how, when, or how ſoon it may be ſo? Were you engaged in any ſcene of intemperance, lewdneſs, debauchery? would that have been a proper ſcene for death? Have you been preſerved from any imminent danger, recovered from any threatening diſorder? Is not that a mercy? Has the deſire of your eyes been taken away by a ſtroke? Have you heard the reproach of many on every ſide? Is not this the will of God? Whether does it call for patience or pride? Have you ſuffered in your ſubſtance? Whether does this teach you to love the world or to deſpiſe it? Is there any uncertainty here? Believe it, Chriſtians, a perſonal application of the truths relating to divine providence, would reveal as it were a new world to you, and would make the paths of God towards you every day more intelligible, every day more profitable, and ſhall I not add, every day more comfortable.

II. We proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. what is implied in *the righteous running into the name of the Lord as a ſtrong tower*. The word *tower*, eſpecially when joined with the epithet *ſtrong*, immediately conveys to the mind the idea of protection and defence. It evidently alludes to the ſtate of many ancient nations and tribes, who were continually expoſed to hoſtile inroads and invaſions, and were obliged to have caſtles and towers as places of refuge and ſecurity; and this is far from being an improper image of the ſtate of a child of God in this preſent world, whether we conſider the common calamities to which he is liable as a man, or the peculiar trials with which he may be afflicted as a good man. To have a clear view of the import of the metaphor, we need only conſider ſome parallel places, where we find the ſame expreſſion, and others of the ſame meaning, Pſal. xviii. 2, 3. "The Lord is my rock and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler and the horn of my ſalvation; and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praiſed, ſo ſhall I be ſaved from mine enemies." Pſal. xxvii. 1, 2. "The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, to eat up my fleſh, they ſtumbled and fell." Pſal. lxi. 2, 3, 4. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou haſt been a ſhelter for me, and a ſtrong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for

ever; I will truſt in the covert of thy wings. Selah." When we hear a good man uſing ſuch expreſſions as theſe, we may gather, with the greateſt certainty and clearneſs, what is the general import of God's being a *ſtrong tower*, namely, that he is a moſt powerful protector; that his almighty providence is the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt defence againſt all enemies of whatever kind, let their art, their activity, their malignity, be what they will.

Though this may not ſeem to need any further explication, yet, for the aſſiſtance and direction of ſerious perſons, let us conſider a little what is implied in *the righteous running into this tower* for their protection. This is the rather neceſſary, that though it is the privilege, the duty, and the practice of the ſervants of God, to make God their defence and ſtay, yet they may be faulty and defective in this part of their duty, and ſuffer a proportional loſs in point of comfort.

1. Then, *running to the name of God as their ſtrong tower*, implies the lively exerciſe of faith both in the power and willingneſs of God to protect them. It is only by faith that we can go to an inviſible God. As faith muſt be the principle of all acceptable ſervice to God, ſo faith is evidently the immediate means of all truſt in or enjoyment of God. Therefore it is ſaid, with the greateſt propriety, "the juſt ſhall live by faith."

You may obſerve I have ſaid the *lively* exerciſe of faith; for, beſides the habitual perſuaſion of the great truths of religion, as the foundation of our adherence to God as our portion, there muſt be an actual contemplation of them as the means of our

ſupport in trial or deliverance from danger. Whatever be the nature or ſource of temptation, we muſt meet it, as it were, and reſiſt it, by taking ſuitable views of the fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of God. Does the believer ſtand in need of any thing ſpiritual or temporal? is he diſtreſſed with the want of it? does he ſee no human or probable way of his being ſupplied with it? He *runs to the name of God as his ſtrong tower*, by conſidering, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof;" that his wiſdom is infinite; and that, if it is really neceſſary, he can eaſily find a way of beſtowing it. Pſal. xxxiv. 9, 10. "O fear the Lord ye his ſaints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord ſhall not want any good thing." He dwells upon the univerſal preſence and the ſpecial providence of God, and endeavours to reaſon down his anxiety and fear. Perhaps he may do it in the words of our bleſſed Saviour, Matth. vi. 25. to the 33d verſe, "Therefore, I ſay unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink, nor yet for your body what ye ſhall put on; is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his ſtature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Conſider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they ſpin; and yet, I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe.

Wherefore, if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (For after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things.

Is the believer diſtreſſed with enemies, malicious, powerful, implacable? does he ſuffer, or is he afraid of ſuffering from them, in his name, in his perſon, in his life itſelf? he conſiders the power of God to ſhield him from their attacks, or more than compenſate all the injuries which he may receive from them, and ſtrengthen and animate him to a vigorous diſcharge of his duty in oppoſition to them, Pſal. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8, "I laid me down and ſlept, I awaked; for the Lord ſuſtained me: I will not be afraid of ten thouſands of people that have ſet themſelves againſt me round about. Ariſe, O Lord; ſave me, O my God; for thou haſt ſmitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou haſt broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy bleſſing is upon thy people. Selah." He endeavours to deliver himſelf from the diſtreſſing fear of man, by the reaſonable and dutiful fear of offending God, Luke xii. 4, 6. "And I ſay unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell, yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18. "Shadrach, Meſhech, and A-

bednego, anſwered, and ſaid to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter. If it be ſo, our God, whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king! But, if not, be it known unto thee, O king! that we will not ſerve thy gods, nor worſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up."

Is the believer afraid of the ordinary evils of life? is he of a timorous nature, trembling at the thoughts of the accidents that may befal him? he runs to the name of God as the ſupreme diſpoſer of every event, and thinks of the inviſible power that governs and directs all viſible things, and that the very miniſters of providence have received a charge concerning all his people: Pſal. xci. 1,——12. "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; my God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers; and under his wings ſhalt thou truſt: his truth ſhall be thy ſhield and buckler. Thou ſhalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs; nor for the deſtruction that waſteth at noon-day. A thouſand ſhall fall at thy ſide, and ten thouſand at thy right hand; but it ſhall not come nigh thee: only with thine eyes ſhalt thou behold, and ſee the reward of the wicked. Becauſe thou haſt made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Moſt High, thy habitation; there

ſhall no evil befal thee, neither ſhall any plague come nigh thy dwelling: for he ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

To the power I joined the willingneſs of God to preſerve and protect his people, on their ſincere and humble application to him for it. This is abſolutely neceſſary as a part of the object of faith. It would be in vain to run to any ſtrong place, with a view of being preſerved from our enemies, unleſs we have ſome ground to hope we ſhall be received into it; and it would be madneſs to flee to a fortreſs kept by an enemy: but God is every righteous man's friend: all the divine perfections are engaged for his welfare: and therefore he may confidently run to God from every danger, and be aſſured both of a kind welcome, and of all that ſafety which is neceſſary for him.

Faith, in this reſpect, has an immediate relation to the promiſes of God. It is his name, as I obſerved on the former head, to which we are to flee, as revealed in his written word; and much of the life of practical religion conſiſts in attending to the tenor, and in a daily application of the promiſes. God himſelf requires us to call upon him in a time of trouble, Pſal. l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou ſhalt glorify me." Nay, he is graciouſly pleaſed to reckon our calling upon him an eſſential character of his own people, Zech. xiii. 9. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as ſilver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they ſhall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will ſay, it is my people; and they ſhall ſay, the Lord

is my God." He is pleaſed to eſteem this, as giving him the glory of his truth and faithfulneſs, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, which we find repreſented in ſcripture as ſo many chambers of protection into which the righteous are called to enter for ſafety and preſervation, Iſa. xxvi. 20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee; hide thyſelf as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpaſt."

I ſhall only further obſerve, that faith in both theſe reſpects, as applying the power and promiſe of God, receives very much ſtrength from the examples of his mercy, either towards ourſelves or others. His name is recorded in every page of the hiſtory of providence. And his people cannot, in a more proper or effectual manner, run into it as a *ſtrong tower*, than by conſidering and weighing the examples of divine interpoſition, in behalf of his faithful ſervants. For this reaſon, is ſo great a part of the holy ſcriptures hiſtorical; becauſe they ſerve, in a more effectual manner, to engrave the truths of religion both on the memory and heart. Many can remember what befel Abraham, David, Samuel, Daniel, and others, who would forget the precepts delivered them in a more abſtract manner. And every one muſt be ſenſible, that the inſtructions which ariſe clearly and obviouſly from hiſtorical facts, come home upon the conſcience with a degree of evidence, ſuperior to any thing that flows merely from the deductions of reaſon. May not the Chriſtian, with great advantage, ſay, "Do I not ſerve an everlaſting and unchangeable God? Is he not the ſame, yeſterday, to-day, and for ever? Is his hand

at all ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; or his ear heavy that it cannot hear? Is not he who ſaved David, the ſtripling, from the ſtrength of Goliah; who ſaved Daniel from the power of the lions; and in many other inſtances, aſſiſted or delivered his own people, when employed in his ſervice, able to ſave me from the power of the enemy, and to carry me through all the trials of this earthly ſtate, whether they ariſe from temptation or ſuffering?" I hope I need not tell you to apply, in the ſame manner, all that you have learned of the wiſdom or goodneſs of Providence, from reading or converſation. For this reaſon, the Pſalmiſt declares his reſolution of communicating the mercy of God to his ſoul, Pſal. lxvi. 16. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my ſoul."

Suffer me here to ſay, that I cannot ſee a ſhadow of reaſon why Chriſtians ſhould not imitate the Pſalmiſt's example, in imparting their experience of divine grace, for their mutual inſtruction and conſolation. If the ſtudent will communicate his intellectual diſcoveries; if the naturaliſt will communicate his facts and obſervations; if the tradeſman will communicate his attainment in his profeſſion; if no man ſcruples to communicate what he hath known to be uſeful, for the health of the body; tell me, ye ſcorners, what ſhould hinder the Chriſtian to communicate to his fellow ſervants, what may ſerve for their ſpiritual conſolation and peace?

But if our mutual experience may be ſerviceable to teach others, how much more muſt the paſt goodneſs of God towards themſelves, encourage his chil-

dren to put their truſt in him? How juſt and beautiful the Pſalmiſt's reflection, Pſal. lxiii. 7. "Becauſe thou haſt been my help; therefore in the ſhadow of thy wings will I rejoice." In the ſame manner he recovers from his doubts and fears, Pſal. lxvii. 5,—12. "I have conſidered the days of old, the years of ancient times; I call to remembrance my ſong in the night; I commune with mine own heart, and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch. Will the Lord caſt off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I ſaid, this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Moſt High. I will remember the works of the Lord; ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old."

Thus, my brethren, the believer runs, by faith, *into the name of God as his ſtrong tower;* and as he who once gets into what he thinks an impregnable fortreſs, will ſpeak to his enemies in the language of diſdain and defiance; ſo he who hath repoſed his confidence in an almighty protector, may tread upon the necks of his enemies, may be confident, that through God he ſhall do valiantly. Neither is it any fable, but matter of certain experience, that many "through faith have ſubdued kingdoms; wrought righteouſneſs; obtained promiſes; ſtopped the mouths of lions; quenched the violence of fire; eſcaped the edge of the ſword; out of weakneſs were made ſtrong; waxed valiant in fight; turned to flight the armies of the aliens," Heb. xi. 33, 34.

2. *The righteous runneth into the name of God as a*

ſtrong tower by the exerciſe of fervent prayer. Prayer is the immediate and direct means of imploring the divine aſſiſtance and protection. Faith is the habitual principle, and prayer is the actual application of it. Many are the precepts in ſcripture enjoining the diligent exerciſe of this duty. Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the ſame with thankſgiving." 1 Theſſ. v. 17. "Pray without ceaſing." Many are the promiſes of a gracious anſwer to our prayers. Matt. vii. 7. "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." ch. xxi. 22. "And all things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive." John xiv. 13. "And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son." There are alſo exhortations to importunity in prayer. Luke xviii. 1. "And he ſpake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Many aſſurances of the ſucceſs of prayer, Pſal. xxxiv. 6. 17. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and ſaved him out of all his troubles. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." Many examples of the power and efficacy of prayer, as in Jacob, David, Daniel.—It ſeems plainly an eſſential character of true piety, to be given to prayer. Pſal. cix. 4. "For my love they are my adverſaries, but I gave myſelf unto prayer." I forbear enlarging on theſe particularly, and ſhall only ſay, that it is quite neceſſary, in order to our *running into the name of God as a ſtrong tower*. Though he knoweth all our wants perfectly, he requires that we implore

his aſſiſtance by prayer. Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God."

The truth is, prayer is the natural remedy to which all are ready to fly in extremity. Even bad men are diſpoſed to cry unto God in great diſtreſs, but his own children are more habitually exerciſed to the duty, and as they only do it on proper principles, and with proper diſpoſitions, ſo they only have the promiſe of acceptance and ſucceſs. Jam. v. 16. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

3. In the laſt place, *The righteous runneth into the name of God as a ſtrong tower*, by diligence in his duty. This alſo is neceſſary and inſeparable from a child of God, and in order to take a diſtinct view of the Chriſtian's diligence, in this particular light, as the foundation of truſt, you may obſerve, that it implies theſe following things. 1. Diligence in all duties in general; in order to aſcertain his character, and to be aſſured of the divine favour and protection, the promiſes of deliverance, of ſtrength and preſervation, are all made to thoſe who ſerve God in ſincerity. There is no ſuch thing as a promiſe in any part of ſcripture to a bad man, as ſuch. There are alſo the moſt poſitive and gracious aſſurances of powerful ſupport in ſuffering, and all neceſſary help to thoſe who truly fear God, Iſa. xliii. 1, 2. "But now, thus ſaith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob! and he that formed thee, O Iſrael! Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou paſſeſt through

the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. When thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt; neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee." Nay, the moſt expreſs declarations, that all things ſhall iſſue to their advantage, however diſcouraging an aſpect they may wear for a ſeaſon. Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe." From this it plainly follows, that the very way to run into the name of God, is, by habitual diligence in doing his will. The more we can, by walking in his fear, keep clear our title to his ſpecial favour, the more unſhaken truſt and confidence we may place in his power and mercy, in every trial; for he hath not forſaken them that love him. So certain is this, that I believe every experienced Chriſtian will bear teſtimony, that when he is unhinged by diſtreſs, when he is filled with anxiety, and fear of any kind, it ariſes as much, or more, from ſuſpicion of himſelf, and doubt of his relation to God, as from any diſbelief of the general truth, that God will ſupport and ſtrengthen his own people. Therefore the righteous may be ſaid to *run into the name of God*, when they exerciſe themſelves in keeping conſciences void of offence, and walk ſo as they may humbly hope for his acceptance and approbation.

2. As a good man runs into his ſtrong tower, by diligence in every part of his duty in general; ſo particularly by a watchful attention to his conduct, in every time of trial or danger. He will be on his guard, leſt by any part of his behaviour he provoke God

to depart from him. He will then, in a peculiar manner, ſet the Lord before him, that he may, with the greater confidence, commit his cauſe and his intereſt to his care. The ſuffering diſciples of Chriſt are often warned of the neceſſity of this. 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Therefore let them that ſuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Whether therefore the danger ariſes from bodily diſtreſs, from worldly loſſes, from ſlander and reproach, or from whatever other quarter, the firſt and great care of the Chriſtian ſhould be, to keep his conſcience undefiled; and the neceſſity of this is the greater, that ſuffering times are always times of trial. It is no eaſy matter to reſiſt the temptations which ariſe from a ſuffering ſtate, ordained expreſsly for the trial of our faith, which we are told, is "more precious than that of gold which periſheth." We may be tempted to impatience under calamity, to reſentment of injuries, to taking wrong and ſinful methods of redreſs. In oppoſition to all theſe, the ſervant of God will be particularly careful to avoid thoſe ſins which his ſituation invites him to, and to diſcharge thoſe duties which the aſpect of providence ſeems to aſk of him; he will conſider this as the great and only object of his attention, and freely commit the conduct of events, and the iſſue of things, to an all-gracious, and almighty God. Pſal. xxxvii. 5, 6. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs. Aud he ſhall bring forth thy righteouſneſs as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."

3. A good man will diligently uſe every lawful

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means for his protection and deliverance. This may be considered as included under the former particular, being a part of his duty. Trust in God, is by no means a presumptuous and slothful security, but a patient dependence on the blessing of providence in an application to our duty. To do otherwise, is just what is called in scripture, *tempting God.* For the wisest purposes, God hath fixed and settled the relation between the means and the end; and we are not to expect, either in natural or spiritual things, to obtain the end, while we despise the means. Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But,

4. In the last place, The good man will renounce all dependence on created help, as such, and place his ultimate hope only on the power and sovereignty of divine providence. He will not neglect the use of outward means, in obedience to the command of God, but will look for the expected benefit from them only by the blessing of God. The *running into a strong tower*, implies a renunciation of our dependence on any thing else; we give up all other methods of defence, and trust in it alone for security. So it is here. There may be not only a dependence on means unlawful in themselves, but a sinful, because an excessive dependence upon such as are most lawful. We see this remark made on Asa. 2 Chron. xvi. 12. "And Asa, in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Many are the evidences we have,

from daily experience, of the weakneſs and uncertainty of all outward means, that we may not be tempted to idolize them, or to truſt in them: and we find, in many paſſages of ſcripture, an expreſs oppoſition ſtated between truſt in God, and truſt in human or created help. Pſal. cxviii. 8, 9. "It is better to truſt in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is better to truſt in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." Pſal. cxlvi. 3. "Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon of man, in whom there is no help."

III. We proceed now to the third thing propoſed; which was, to conſider the perfect ſecurity of the righteous, *who runneth into the name of the Lord as a ſtrong tower—the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* And here, my brethren, I cannot help obſerving, that though this is a truth of the moſt manifeſt importance, and, at the ſame time, the moſt undoubted certainty, it is what but few attain to the unſhaken perſuaſion and daily application of, in their paſſage through this valley of tears. In order to illuſtrate it, I ſhall ſhortly conſider, 1*ſt*, Wherein this ſafety of the righteous conſiſts. 2*dly*, The abſolute certainty of their being thus preſerved ſafe.

We are told, *the righteous runneth into this tower and is ſafe.* In a perfect conſiſtence with the uſe of the metaphor, the word might perhaps be better tranſlated, *is exalted*, or *placed on high.* Now, their ſafety, I think, conſiſts in the following particulars. 1. God, many times, by the courſe of his providence preſerves them from dangers which they could not otherwiſe eſcape. Every good man, who has attend-

ed, if I may ſo ſpeak, to his own hiſtory, muſt have obſerved, that he hath been delivered from danger by ſuch means as were no way the effect of his own prudence or foreſight, nor indeed could be, and which therefore he is conſtrained to aſcribe to the goodneſs and wiſdom of Providence. Nay, ſometimes things fall out ſo contrary to human expectation, and the ordinary courſe of things, that he is conſtrained, with wonder, to confeſs the very finger of God. He ſometimes blaſts the counſel of the wicked, and makes their devices of none effect. The Egyptians thought the Iſraelites were ſo incloſed in the wilderneſs, with the Red Sea before them, and their army at their back, that it was impoſſible for them to eſcape: but God, by a mighty hand, and an outſtretched arm, opened a way for them through the midſt of the waters, and their enemies were drowned in the depths of the ſea. Haman, no doubt, thought his vengeance ſure againſt all the Jews; but, when it was juſt ready to burſt, God turned his devices againſt himſelf, and cauſed him to periſh by the very means which he had contrived for the deſtruction of the innocent.

I need not attempt, becauſe indeed it is impoſſible, to enumerate the various ways by which the great Diſpoſer of all things works deliverance in danger. He ſometimes changes the hearts of enemies, as he did of Eſua towards Jacob—and of the Apoſtle Paul, when breathing out threatenings againſt the church—He ſometimes carves out other work for perſecutors, as Saul was once and again called off from the purſuit of David by the Philiſtines; and ſometimes he makes the intended evil

prove a real bleſſing; as in the caſe of Joſeph, in whoſe hiſtory we have one of the moſt beautiful draughts of Providence that is any where to be ſeen, and done with that union of majeſty and ſimplicity, which ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhes the ſacred writings. The whole hundred and twenty-fourth Pſalm is a celebration of divine power, and a hymn of praiſe for divine protection. "If it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide, now may Iſrael ſay; if it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide, when men roſe up againſt us, then they had ſwallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled againſt us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the ſtream had gone over our ſoul: then the proud waters had gone over our ſoul. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our ſoul is eſcaped as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowlers: the ſnare is broken, and we are eſcaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

I ſhall only add, on this head, that a ſerious perſon, when thinking or ſpeaking of deliverance from danger, will always conſider ſin as the greateſt danger: he will reflect, with the higheſt pleaſure, on the inſtances in which God has enabled him to diſcharge his duty with conſtancy. Let me beg of you to remember, with what courage and reſolution the young perſons, Shadrach, Meſhech and Abednego ſpoke to king Nebuchadnezzar, and reſiſted the threatenings of that powerful prince. It is worth while to obſerve, that they and Daniel ſeem, in that perilous time, to have given themſelves much to the exerciſe of prayer. Thus, *running into the name of God as a ſtrong tower*, they obtained ſecurity, while

other very eminent perſons, by truſting in themſelves, or boaſting of their own ſtrength, fell before temptations of a very trifling kind, as Abraham and Iſaac in denying their wives, and the Apoſtle Peter in denying his maſter.

2. The ſecurity of the righteous conſiſts in the promiſe of ſtrength and ſupport in the time of trial. Although God preſerves his people from many dangers, yet he has no where promiſed them deliverance from all. On the contrary, we are told, "that all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecution; and that through much tribulation we muſt enter into the kingdom of God." Yet, even in theſe circumſtances, they are ſafe, becauſe God is with them in their afflictions; his rod and his ſtaff powerfully ſupports them. Need I tell you, that here, in a particular manner, the text is exemplified: *The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* Under a ſmarting rod, what can a child of God do, but enter into his ſecret chambers, and ſupplicate the aſſiſtance and preſence of his reconciled Father? and has he not promiſed to grant it? Iſa. xliii. 1. "But now, thus ſaith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob! and he that formed thee, O Iſrael! fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." And has he not many times, in fact, granted it? The three children walking at liberty in the midſt of the fire with the Son of God as their companion, was but one inſtance of what has many times happened in every age. Who would not rather be in the place of Paul and Silas, ſinging praiſes to God in their chains, than be the maſter of the

world, with all the danger and anxieties of a throne? Let me here make an obſervation, which I think is warranted both by ſcripture and experience, that juſt as in point of duty, ſo alſo in point of ſuffering, the ſecurity and comfort of the people of God depends upon their running into, and, if I may ſo expreſs it, keeping within the bounds of their ſtrong tower. If they keep cloſe to God, no ſuffering will diſconcert them; no enemy will terrify them: but, if they neglect this, they may be unhinged by a very ſlight trial. I hinted before, ſelf-dependence will make men fall before a very trifling temptation: but dependence on divine ſtrength will make them ſuperior to the greateſt. In the very ſame manner, it hath been often ſeen, that perſons who have loſt their temper, or loſt their courage, in ſufferings of no extraordinary kind, when more ſeverely tried have behaved infinitely better, and being conſtrained to flee to God for protection, have found ſuch benefit from it, that they have ſlept in peace and comfort in a loathſome priſon, have gone with an undaunted ſtep to an ignominious ſcaffold, nay, and embraced, with joy and tranſport, a halter or a ſtake.

3. In the laſt place, The righteous is ſafe under the divine protection, as they are ſure of deliverance in the end, and complete victory over all ſufferings of every kind. Thus it is ſaid, Pſal. xxxiv. 17. to the end, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a contrite ſpirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the

Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken. Evil ſhall ſlay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous ſhall be deſolate. The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate." There is a great beauty in this laſt paſſage, which is loſt or concealed in our tranſlation; it lies in the oppoſition between the 19th and 21ſt verſes. The 19th verſe runs thus, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." In oppoſition to this, it is ſaid, in the 21ſt verſe, as it ſhould be tranſlated, "One evil ſhall ſlay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous ſhall be deſolate." This probably points at the great diſtinguiſhing ſecurity of good men, that their ſalvation is ſafe in the keeping of God, and quite beyond the reach of their moſt implacable enemies. Whatever ſtraitening circumſtances they may be reduced to, they have treaſures in heaven, "which neither moth nor ruſt can corrupt, nor thief break through and ſteal." They may be driven from their habitations, or baniſhed from their country; they may reſemble thoſe of whom we read, Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38. "And others had trials of cruel mockings, and ſcourgings; yea moreover of bonds and impriſonment. They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword; they wandered about in ſheep ſkins, and goat ſkins; being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deſarts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth;" but they cannot be baniſh-

ed from the kingdom of heaven. No tyrant can ſhut the gates of paradiſe againſt them; for they have been opened by him, "who openeth and no man ſhutteth; and ſhutteth, and no man openeth." I have often read with admiration, both in the inſpired writings and eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, the patience and conſtancy of the martyrs. How edifying is it to obſerve, that by witneſſing a good confeſſion, together with the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, they have become ſuperior to the fear of death, and have been enabled to deſpiſe or pity the weakneſs of perſecuting rage? Sometimes we may clearly ſee, the unrighteous judges torn in pieces, with the fury of infernal paſſions, vainly endeavouring to wreck their malice, by newly invented tortures, and the happy priſoners, as it were, already beyond their reach, while by faith and hope they are firmly aſſured of an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven above."

Having thus conſidered the nature of the good man's ſecurity, I am now to conſider the abſolute certainty of it.—On this I ſhall be very ſhort, it reſts upon the divine perfection, the divine promiſe, and the experience of the ſaints. 1. The divine perfection. Is there any thing too hard for the Almighty? Is he not the Lord of nature? And are not all things obedient to his will? The great enemy of ſouls, and all his inſtruments and agents, are under the government of God. He ſets bounds to their rage, and will not ſuffer them to go ſo much as one hair's breadth beyond the limits he hath appointed for

them. How great then muſt be the ſecurity of thoſe who put their truſt in him? Again,

2. Conſider his faithful promiſe; he hath ſaid it, he hath repeated it, he hath ſworn it, that his covenant ſhall ſtand faſt for ever. Every page of the ſacred oracles is full of the moſt gracious aſſurances; and theſe expreſſed in the moſt condeſcending terms. Pſal. xci. 1,—4. "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; my God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings ſhalt thou truſt: his truth ſhall be thy ſhield and buckler." Zech. ii. 8. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." Nay, the very miniſters of his providence are your attendants. Pſal. xci. 11. "For he ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

3. Conſider the experience of the ſaints; they all with one voice, bear their teſtimony to the divine faithfulneſs and mercy. It is with this particular view that the Pſalmiſt ſays in that forecited text, Pſal. ix. 10. "And they that know thy name will put their truſt in thee; for thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee." And indeed in every age, Chriſtians of ſtanding and experience are ready to give their ſanction to the certainty of God's promiſes, and will often confeſs the greatneſs of his paſt mercy, even while they are chiding their own impatience and diſtruſt, that it can ſcarcely ſuffice to embolden them for future duty, and prepare them for future trials.

IV. I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And, 1. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the ſinfulneſs of diſtruſt. Has God laid ſo noble a foundation for our dependence upon him; and are we ſtill ſo backward to the duty? Is not diſtruſt in ſome meaſure a denial of God himſelf? A denial of his preſence, a denial of his perfections, and diſbelief of his promiſes? Let us all be covered with ſhame, when we conſider how much we have already diſhonoured him, in this reſpect. And let us pray, that he may enable us henceforward not only to ſend up our cries to heaven, for relief in diſtreſs, but to caſt our cares and burdens upon the Lord, in the faith "that he will ſuſtain us, that he will never ſuffer the righteous to be moved."

2. You may ſee the remedy of diſtruſt, which is, to be more and more acquainted with the name of God. Contemplate his glory in the viſible creation: he may be ſeen not only in his ſpreading out the heavens like a curtain, but in the formation of the meaneſt creature; in a pile of graſs, or in a grain of ſand. While you are daily taſting his gifts, forget not to acknowledge his bounty, in the riſing ſun, the growing corn, and the falling rain. Think of his faithful word, read his promiſes, lay them up in your memories, write them in your hearts; and eſpecially, the exceeding great and precious promiſes of the everlaſting goſpel, which may be yours, which you are entreated to accept as yours, and if they be not yours, you ſhall render an account to himſelf at the laſt day, for receiving them in vain. Think alſo of his providence, all you have ſeen,

and all you have felt, of preſerving goodneſs, and of redeeming grace; and continue to cleave to him as your portion, in the Pſalmiſt's words, Pſal. xlviii. 14. "This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death."

3. In the laſt place, learn from hence, what is the ſureſt and ſhorteſt, and indeed, the only ſafe way of deliverance from ſuffering. Flee to God as your *ſtrong tower*, by prayer and ſupplication: but with this, endeavour by the renewed exerciſe of faith in your redeemer's blood, to aſcertain your title to the favour of God; endeavour by a ſtedfaſt adherence to your duty, to commit your ways to God; and ſo ſoon, and ſo far, as you have good ground to know that you are his children, you ought to reſiſt and baniſh every doubt of your ſecurity. Rom. viii. 28. "And we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpoſe." Verſe 32d of the ſame chapter. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things."

SERMON II.

THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

EXODUS, xxxiii. 18.

And he ſaid, I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.

THESE are the words of an Old Teſtament ſaint; of that Moſes, who, as a ſervant, was faithful over all the houſe of God. True piety is the ſame in ſubſtance in all ages, and points at one thing as its centre and its reſt, the knowledge and enjoyment of God. In the preceding verſes, Moſes had been employed in earneſt prayer and interceſſion for the people of Iſrael. He had met with ſucceſs and acceptance in theſe requeſts; for it is ſaid, in the 14th verſe, "My preſence ſhall go with thee, and I will give thee reſt." And in the 17th, "And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, I will do this thing alſo that thou haſt ſpoken; for thou haſt found grace in my ſight, and I know thee by name." The condeſcenſion of a gracious God, though it ſatisfies, does not extinguiſh the deſires of his ſaints, but rather makes them more ardent and importunate; for he immediately adds, in the words of the text, *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory.* It is high-

ly probable, from what follows, that this desire included more than was proper for the present state; yet such a discovery as was possible, or could be useful to him, is graciously promised, "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

My dear brethren, it is our distinguished privilege, that we have daily unmolested access to the house and ordinances of God. We ought to rejoice, that we have so many clear and express promises of the divine presence, in New Testament worship. But what cause have we to be ashamed, that we are so exceeding prone to stop short in the threshold, to content ourselves with the mere form, instead of earnestly breathing after real, inward, and sensible communion with God. I have therefore chosen this subject, in the view of that solemn ordinance, *The Lord's Supper*, where we have a sensible representation of Christ crucified, the great mean of our access to God, that we may serve him, on that occasion particularly, and the remaining part of our lives habitually, in spirit and in truth. And, Oh, that we may have daily more experience of the sweetness and benefit of his service on earth! and may daily long more for that time, when we shall serve him in a manner infinitely more perfect and joyful in his temple above!

In discoursing on this subject, I propose, in dependence on divine strength,

I. To explain what is the object of a saint's de-

ſire, when he ſaith, in the words of Moſes, *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.*

II. To improve the ſubject—particularly by pointing out what is the moſt proper preparation for ſuch a diſcovery.

I. Then, I am to explain what is the object of a ſaint's deſire, when he ſaith, in the words of Moſes, *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.* It is very probable, from the paſſage following the text, which I have read, that Moſes had ſome regard to the ſenſible appearance, which, in that diſpenſation, did often accompany or notify the immediate preſence of the angel of the covenant. He deſired, probably, to be ſtrengthened for beholding ſtedfaſtly the Shechinah, or bright and luminous cloud which ſometimes appeared over the tabernacle, and, by its glorious luſtre, tended to affect the mind with a ſenſe of the power and ſovereignty of the Lord Jehovah. But this, ſurely, was not all; for this, in itſelf, was only a ſubſidiary mean, which ſerved to carry their views to the real and ſpiritual glory of God. To the laſt, therefore, we ſhall confine our attention, as to what the goſpel particularly opens to us, and what believers are enabled, by faith, to apprehend.

When Chriſtians, then, deſire to ſee the glory of God, it ſeems chiefly to imply the following things. 1. They deſire to ſee the glory of an eternal independent God; they deſire to ſee the only living and true God in his own inherent excellence and infinite perfection. God is the ſource and ſum of all excellence; or, in the language of the Pſalmiſt, "the perfection of beauty." Every thing noble or beautiful

in the creature, is only a faint ray from the fulneſs of the Creator's glory. Therefore he is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt profound veneration of every reaſonable creature. The viſion and fruition of God conſtitute the employment and happineſs of heaven: and even here, while they are in preparation for the higher houſe, the ſaints deſire ſuch a diſcovery of the divine glory as their condition will admit of, and take pleaſure in contemplating his nature, as revealed to them both in his word and in his works. They dwell, with adoring wonder, on all his attributes, which are boundleſs and unſearchable: the immenſity of his being, who fills heaven and earth with his preſence, who ſeeth in ſecret, and from whom the thickeſt darkneſs cannot cover us; his irreſiſtible power, "who ſpake, and it was done, who commanded and it ſtood faſt;—— who called this great univerſe out of nothing into being, "who doth in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth whatever ſeems good unto him:" his infinite holineſs and purity, with whom "evil cannot dwell, nor ſinners ſtand in his preſence; who looketh to the moon, and it ſhineth not, to the ſtars, and they are not pure in his ſight:" his infinite wiſdom, "who worketh all things according to his will, who bringeth the counſel of the heathen to nought, and makes the devices of the people of none effect:" his boundleſs goodneſs, which fills the earth, and flows in plenteous ſtreams to all the creatures of his power.

But, perhaps, ſome are ſaying, what is there extraordinary or peculiar in all this? is it not clearly revealed in the word of God? can any Chriſtian be

ignorant of it? If Moſes, in that early diſpenſation deſired a diſcovery of the divine perfections, nothing of that kind is wanting to us, who, ſince the fulneſs of time, have ſo complete a revelation in the New Teſtament. But, my brethren, I muſt beg of you to obſerve theſe two things:

1. That there is in the fulneſs of the Godhead an infinite and endleſs variety even for the employment of our intellectual powers. Well might Zophar, in the book of Job, ſay, Job xi. 7, 8, 9. "Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea."

2. That the real and proper knowledge of the glory of God is by inward and ſpiritual illumination. The holy ſcriptures themſelves, however clear a diſcovery they contain of the nature of God, are no better than a ſealed book to many even of the greateſt comprehenſion of mind. It is one thing to think, and ſpeak, and reaſon on the perfections of God, as an object of ſcience, and another to glorify him as God, or to have a deep and awful impreſſion of him upon our hearts. Real believers will know this by experience. A diſcovery of the glory of God, is not to inform them of a truth which they never heard before, but to give lively penetrating views of the meaning and importance of thoſe truths of which they had, perhaps, heard and ſpoken times without number. Sometimes one word ſpoken of the Eternal, the Almighty, the Holy One, will be carried home upon the conſcience and heart with ſuch irre-

ſiſtible force, as to ſhew them more of God than ever they had ſeen before. O what a difference is there between the way in which we uſe the ſame words in prayer or praiſe, at one time, and at another! None but downright atheiſts will deny the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God; but how far is this general acknowledgment from that overwhelming ſenſe of his preſence which believers have ſometimes in his worſhip in public or in ſecret. What a new ſenſe of God's preſence had Jacob at Bethel, when he ſaid, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not: and he was afraid, and ſaid, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" What a ſenſe of God's preſence had Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13. when "ſhe called the name of the Lord that ſpake unto her, Thou God ſeeſt me; for ſhe ſaid, have I alſo here looked after him that ſeeth me?" or Job, when he expreſſes himſelf thus, Job xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes."

I ſhall only farther obſerve, that it plainly appears, that this diſcovery of the glory of God belongs only to his own people. Wicked men are ſaid, in ſcripture, to be ſuch as know not God. They are alſo deſcribed a little differently, as not having God in all their thoughts; not but that wicked men may have a general or cuſtomary belief, in the being and perfections of God, but becauſe they have not that intimate ſenſe of his preſence, that diſcovery of the glory and amiableneſs of his perfections, which is

peculiar to his own children. Even the natural perfections of God, his power and wiſdom, cannot be beheld with ſuch veneration by any, as by thoſe who are ſenſible of their obligations to ſerve him. But above all, the glory of his infinite holineſs and juſtice can never be ſeen, but by thoſe who deſire to ſubmit to it; nor the glory of his infinite mercy, but by thoſe who ſee themſelves indebted to it. This leads me to obſerve,

2. That the believer deſires to ſee the glory of a gracious and reconciled God, not only infinitely glorious in himſelf, but infinitely merciful to him. This view ought never to be ſeparated from the former. Take away the divine mercy, and the luſtre of his other perfections is too ſtrong for us to behold. The power, wiſdom, holineſs and juſtice of God, ſeparated from his mercy, ſpeak nothing but unmixed terror to the guilty. It is very probable, that there was ſomething in the deſire of Moſes, in the text, according to his own view, ignorant and unadviſed; but God granted his requeſt only in ſuch a way as could be uſeful to him. When he ſays, *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory*, the anſwer is in the following terms, "I will make all my goodneſs paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I will ſhew mercy." And again, it is ſaid in the following chapter, 6, 7, verſes, "And the Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth. Keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſ-

ſion, and ſin; and that will by no means clear the guilty: viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

We may alſo ſee, that in the whole diſpenſation of divine grace to men, God is repreſented as coming under a peculiar relation to them; and they are called not only to ſerve him as God, but to truſt in him as their God. Every hearer muſt be ſenſible how eſſential this is to a believer's deſire, of ſeeing the glory of God. He cannot conſider him as God over all, without at the ſame time, remembering, that he is one with whom he hath to do. There is alſo a neceſſity here peculiar to ourſelves. The holy angels conſider him as their maker and their happineſs: but the children of Adam muſt conſider, not only his goodneſs to the innocent, but his mercy to the guilty. This glory of God ſhines brightly, and ſhines only in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. God, we are told, "dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto. No man hath ſeen God at any time; but the only begotten of the Father he hath declared him." In this wonderful diſpenſation, indeed, all the perfections of God are found united; but above all, "Grace and mercy ſhine and reign through righteouſneſs, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord."

Here I muſt add, that the believer not only deſires to ſee the glory of God's mercy, in general, as diſplayed in the goſpel, in which he may have a ſhare, but to take an appropriating view of it, as what he hath a clear right and title to call his own. Doubtleſs the mercy of God is publiſhed, offering ſalvation to the chief of ſinners. It is their duty to accept of

it; it is their intereſt to cleave to it. But they are many times deterred by what they ſee in God, they are many times diſcouraged by what they feel in themſelves, and are afraid to aſſert their title to ſo great a bleſſing. But when, by the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to ſee the infinite price paid for their redemption in the croſs of Chriſt; when they ſee the riches of divine grace in the croſs of Chriſt; when they hear the urgent invitations to them to believe in the croſs of Chriſt; when they are enabled freely to renounce and quit hold of every other claim; when their hearts are ſweetly conſtrained by the bonds of their Redeemer's love; they can then look upon God as their reconciled Father through him who hath made peace by the blood of his croſs, and ſay unto him, *My Lord! and my God!* What an endearing view is this of the divine glory, and what ineffable ſatisfaction ſprings from it to the ſoul! What an unſpeakable conſolation to thoſe who have been wounded in their ſpirits, and grieved in their minds, when they are enabled to apply the encouraging promiſes of the holy ſcriptures! Iſa. i. 18. "Come, now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool." Iſa. xliii. 25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions, for mine own ſake; and will not remember thy ſins." xliv. 22. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and as a cloud thy ſins. Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

3. The believer deſires to ſee the glory of God as an all-ſufficient God. This is a neceſſary view

of God, as the ſupport and happineſs of the creature, as well as the ſtrength and conſolation of the ſinner.

My brethren, man was made for living upon God; forgetting this, he firſt went aſtray from him. Self-ſufficiency, and a deluſive ſenſe of independance, is inſeparable from a ſinful ſtate. Conviction levels a blow at the foundation of this miſtake. Serious conſideration ſhews us how inſufficient we are for our own happineſs. Daily experience diſcovers the inherent vanity of all created comforts in themſelves, and as ſeparated from God. When the penitent returns to God, he not only returns from the ſervice of other maſters to him as his rightful Lord; but forſakes all forbidden joys, and cleaves to God as his happineſs, and reſts in him as his portion. Does not this appear from the uniform language of ſcripture, with regard to both parts of the covenant? what belongs to God, and what belongs to man. See the tenor of an early promiſe to the father of the faithful, Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not, Abram; I am thy ſhield, and thy exceeding great reward." Multitudes of others are of the ſame import.

The power and providence of God, in behalf of his people, are largely and beautifully deſcribed, in the ninety-firſt Pſalm. "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; my God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings ſhalt thou truſt. His truth ſhall

be thy ſhield and buckler, &c." 2 Corinth. vi. 17. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty." On the other hand, the invitation or exhortation to return, is ordinarily preſſed from the profit of the change, Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth! come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And, to name no more paſſages, when God came to eſtabliſh the faith of Abraham in his promiſe, he ſays, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am the almighty," or, as it ought to be tranſlated, the all-ſufficient God; "walk before me, and be thou perfect." Now, believers deſire to ſee the glory of God, as all-ſufficient; and all diſcoveries of this nature are attended with unſpeakable complacence and ſatisfaction. They ſee the glory of an infinite God as theirs, and rejoice in the richneſs of their portion. Wearied with repeated diſappointments, and deeply convinced of the vanity of the creature, they reſt in him, as able to give them complete happineſs; happineſs that will never change! happineſs that will never be exhauſted! He that hath choſen God as his portion, hath, as our Saviour beautifully expreſſeth it, made "choice of that good part, which cannot be taken away from him."

My brethren, we are now come to the very ſubſtance of practical religion. The glory of an all-ſufficient God, appears as more than a balance to all that pretends to rival him in our affections; to all

that we are called to give up for his ſake. When the believer ſees the fulneſs of God, then his anxiety, and diſtreſſing fears of every kind, are at an end. Does he want proviſion? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. The young lions do lack and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing." Does he want friends? God is able to make his enemies to be at peace with him. Does he want any outward comfort? God is able to procure it, or make him happy without it. Not to mention particulars; the triumph of faith, in this view, is to attain an abſolute and unconditional reſignation to the will of God, with a firm perſuaſion, that he is able to make all things work together for our good, and willing to beſtow every thing that is for our real intereſt. It is to ſay with the prophet, Hab. iii. 17. "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation."

I ſhall only add, that the divine all-ſufficiency is to be conſidered, as regarding our ſanctification as well as comfort. What diſtreſs does not the Chriſtian often ſuffer from the treachery of his own heart, and from the power of ſurrounding temptations? Covered with ſhame for his paſt unſteadfaſtneſs, convinced by experience of his own weakneſs, he hath no other refuge but in God. And what courage does he derive from the fulneſs of divine perfection, the greatneſs of divine power, and the faithfulneſs of the

divine promiſe? "My grace ſhall be ſufficient for thee, and my ſtrength ſhall be made perfect in weakneſs." He then ſays, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxi. 16. "I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only."

II. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And, *1ſt*, Let us admire the divine condeſcenſion, in admitting his ſaints to a diſcovery of his glory. Solomon ſays, with very great propriety, in the language of aſtoniſhment: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" The ſame ought to be, nay, the ſame certainly are, the ſentiments of every real believer. But let us remember what has been hinted at above, that our acceſs to God, and our communion with him, is, and only can be, through the Mediator of the new covenant, in whom we have acceſs, by faith, unto God.

2dly, Let me beſeech you to try yourſelves, whether this ever hath been your attainment, and whether it is your ſincere deſire? Do you know, in any meaſure, what it is to ſee the glory of the true God? Hath he appeared before you in terrible majeſty? Have your very ſouls been made to bow down before him, and to give him the glory that is juſtly due to his name? Have you ſeen the glory of a reconciled God? Have you choſen him in Chriſt as your portion? Have you devoted yourſelves without reſerve to his diſpoſal? Again, have you ſeen the glory of an all-ſufficient God? Surely I ſpeak to many who have ſeen the vanity of the creature. Probably

you have tasted a little of the sufferings of a sinful state. Where did you seek your consolation? where do you find your support? Have you learned the holy and happy art of pouring out your souls to God? Have you felt the sweetness of it? And have you said, with the Psalmist, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee?" Is it your earnest desire to see the glory of God? Can you say with the Psalmist, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. "O God! thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

3*dly*, I will now proceed to exhort you, in the most earnest manner, to diligence in seeking after real communion with God in his instituted worship. How highly are we favoured with light and liberty? how little are many sensible of their privileges? I have often, on such occasions, put you in mind of the fatal effects of a heartless, customary, formal worship: it is provoking to God, pernicious to others, hardening to the heart, and ruining to the soul. Were but a society of those Protestants abroad, who are lying under persecution, to enjoy the season which we now enjoy, what an edge would be upon their spirits? what a sense of gratitude in their hearts? what fire and zeal in their affections? Strange, indeed, that public prosperity should be so stupifying, and the approach of eternity to every individual should not be awakening, while the young and strong are hurried off the stage, while every day is bringing us nearer to our last, while every ordinance

is adding to our charge, that we ſhould not deſire to ſee the glory of God in his ſanctuary here, that it may be the earneſt of our future inheritance, and prepare us for his immediate preſence hereafter.

Suffer me to ſpeak a few words to thoſe that are young. God is my witneſs, that their welfare is at my heart. Perhaps you will think, what hath been ſaid hardly applicable to you. The deſire of Moſes, the man of God, intimate communion and fellowſhip with God, the attainment of ripe and experienced Chriſtians, all this you will ſay, is unſuitable to me: nay, perhaps, by a baſtard humility, you will ſay, to expect it would be preſumption in me. But you are greatly deceived; there are none who have more gracious invitations to come to God than young ſinners: there are none who have greater reaſon to expect nearneſs to God than young ſaints. Do you not read, that God revealed himſelf to Samuel the child, when he neglected Eli the old prophet? Beſides I would recommend earneſtneſs and affection to you; not only for your greater profit, but to prevent your apoſtaſy. A little religion is very hard to hold; it is like a lamp which is hardly lighted, which the leaſt breath of wind will extinguiſh, or a tree that is but newly planted, which a rude thruſt will overturn. Unleſs you make God and his ſervice, your hearty choice, you will not carry it long as your burden, but will be ſoon tempted to throw it down. Be concerned, therefore, I beſeech you, to attend on his inſtituted worſhip, not in a careleſs and formal manner, but let the "deſire of your ſouls be to his name, and the remembrance of him."

I ſhall now conclude the ſubject, by offering to

thoſe, who would ſee the glory of God, a few directions, as to the beſt preparation for ſuch a diſcovery.

1. If you would ſee the glory of God in his ſanctuary, be ſerious in ſelf-examination, and in the renunciation of all known ſin. Holineſs is an eſſential attribute of the divine nature; and, therefore, he muſt be worſhipped in the beauty of holineſs. Thus the Pſalmiſt reſolved with himſelf, Pſal. xxvi. 6. "I will waſh mine hands in innocence, ſo will I compaſs thine altar, O Lord!" It is true, none, who have any knowledge of the corruption of their own hearts, can reaſonably hope to be perfectly free from ſin in the preſent life: yet a real Chriſtian will have it, as the object of his daily ſtudy, to "cleanſe himſelf from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, that he may perfect holineſs in the fear of God." It was ſin that firſt rendered us unfit for communion with God; and, therefore, our recovery of this happy privilege will be but in proportion to our ſanctification. To bring ſinful diſpoſitions, indulged, and ſtill ſuffered in the heart, to the worſhip of God, and to expect acceptance in ſuch a ſtate, is implied blaſphemy, and the greateſt diſhonour we can poſſibly do to him.

2. In order to ſee the glory of God, you muſt be clothed with humility. No diſpoſition is more eſſentially neceſſary to a Chriſtian at all times, but more eſpecially, when he makes an immediate approach to God in his worſhip: Iſa. lxvi. 2. "For all thoſe things hath mine hand made; and all thoſe things have been, ſaith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word." And, indeed, how can we conſider the nature of that God whom

we worſhip, and our own ſinful and miſerable eſtate, without being ſtruck with a ſenſe of the neceſſity of deep humility and ſelf-abaſement in our intercourſe with him? It is particularly to be noticed, that ſelf-abaſement, and even ſelf-abhorrence, is the immediate effect of a ſenſe of the divine preſence. See to this purpoſe, Iſa. vi. 1,—5. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple: above it ſtood the ſeraphims: each one had ſix wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory! And the poſts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the houſe was filled with ſmoke. Then ſaid I, Wo is me; for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts!" See alſo Job xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee: wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes." Let us endeavour therefore, to be truly and inwardly humble. Let us remember the grace of redemption, what guilty criminals we were, before unmerited mercy and ſovereign love found out a way for our recovery. Happy they, where humility ariſes from a real exerciſe of ſoul! How difficult, how rare a thing, is true humility! How eaſy is it to uſe modeſt and ſubmiſſive expreſſions, compared to attaining a truly humble and mortified ſtate of mind? May almighty God

by his power, make us humble; and do thou, O bleſſed Jeſus! "caſt down every high thought, and lofty imagination that exalteth itſelf againſt thee."

3. In the laſt place; if you deſire to ſee the glory of God, be fervent in preparatory prayer: if there is any bleſſing that requires importunity and wreſtling with God, ſurely this high and happy privilege of communion with him in his houſe muſt be of that kind. And, I think, we are warranted to ſay, that, in the divine government, there are ſome bleſſings that require more importunity than others. See a remarkable paſſage, Mark ix. 28, 29. "And when he was come into the houſe, his diſciples aſked him privately, why could not we caſt him out? and he ſaid unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and faſting." If ſome devils were ſo obſtinate in their poſſeſſion, that the ſame degree of faith and fervour, which prevailed over others, could not caſt them out, muſt not the ſame thing hold, from analogy, with reſpect to other mercies? and how juſtly are indifferent, luke-warm worſhippers denied that bleſſing which they ſo lightly eſteem? Let me therefore earneſtly beſeech every ſerious perſon not to reſtrain prayer before God, but to repeat and urge the plea, that he would be graciouſly preſent with us; that he would pour down his Spirit from on high, and make us to know to our happy experience, "that a day in his courts is better than a thouſand; and that it is better to be door-keepers in the houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs."

SERMON III.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION.

ISAIAH, lxiii. 1. ſecond clauſe.

———This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength?———

MY brethren, all the works of God are great and marvellous, worthy of the attention and admiration of his rational creatures. The contemplation of what is now revealed of him, is the nobleſt employment of which we are capable in this world: and the more clear and enlarged contemplation of him ſhall be our employment and happineſs in the world above. But of all the works of God, there is none in which his perfections are ſo ſignally diſplayed, as in the redemption of an elect world through Jeſus Chriſt. All other views of his glory are faint and fading in compariſon of this. However much we are called to adore the power and wiſdom of Creation, or the goodneſs and bounty of Providence, our praiſes are extremely defective, if we omit that new ſong which he hath put into our mouths, even praiſe to our God for his unſpeakable gift.

Redeeming love, my brethren, is the immediate object of our attention in the holy ordinance of the

Lord's ſupper. Here is a ſymbolical repreſentation of it, that faith may be ſtrengthened by the aid of ſenſe. I hope, therefore, it will not be improper, by way of preparation for it, to take a view of the glory of our Redeemer's character, whoſe ſufferings we are now to commemorate. As ſalvation is an agreeable ſound, ſo the name of a Saviour is a delightful name to every believer. I may therefore ſafely preſume upon the attention of all ſuch at leaſt, while I endeavour to ſet him before you, as he is repreſented in the ſtrong and forcible language of the text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength?* Such a theme will be the moſt proper introduction to the work of this day; that, as we are to commemorate Chriſt's ſufferings as an extraordinary event, he is here ſpoken of, and his appearance inquired into, in words of aſtoniſhment and admiration: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength!* I ſhall not ſpend time in aſſigning the reaſons why interpreters generally apply theſe words to Chriſt, but only obſerve, that, on this ſuppoſition, they contain a mixed repreſentation of glory and ſuffering, of ſtrength and abaſement, which is the very ſubſtance and meaning of a Saviour on the croſs.

Agreeably to this, the ſingle point I have in view, in the preſent diſcourſe, is, through divine aſſiſtance, to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſuf-

ferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation, or in the language of the text, how he might be ſaid, *to travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength:* and then I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I. I am to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſufferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation. As the love of God to man, in providing redemption for him, was inconceiveable, ſo the mean which he employed, in accompliſhing this great work, was equally aſtoniſhing—that his eternal and well beloved Son ſhould veil his divine glory, clothe himſelf with human fleſh, ſubject himſelf to a life of pain and ſuffering, and at laſt make his ſoul an offering for ſin upon a croſs. This, as it was not after the manner of men, nor bore upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom; as it was deſigned, and doth tend, to abaſe the pride of man, and exalt the grace of God; ſo it is with difficulty that man can be brought to an approbation of it. "The croſs of Chriſt was to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs." It is therefore proper, that when we are to commemorate the incarnation and death of our Redeemer, we ſhould attend to thoſe evidences of his divine glory that ſtill appeared even in his loweſt abaſement. By this means, while we grieve for the ſufferings that ſin brought upon him, we may ſtill triumph in his power; for he is glorious even in his red apparel, and travels in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

I muſt here obſerve, that I do not mainly intend,

in diſcourſing on this ſubject, to eſtabliſh the truth of our Saviour's divine miſſion, againſt thoſe who deny it on the above or any other account: this would be too cold and abſtracted an argument for our preſent purpoſe. What I propoſe, is chiefly, and directly, deſigned for heightening the devotion, for quickening the love, and increaſing the faith and comfort of believers. However, at the ſame time, conſidering the humiliation of Chriſt, in the light of an objection againſt his divine commiſſion, from the ſuggeſtions of human wiſdom, what ſhall be ſaid may alſo be conſidered as an anſwer to this objection, and ſerving to remove the offence of the croſs.

1*ſt*, Upon this ſubject, therefore, obſerve, firſt, the glory of our Redeemer, in his ſufferings, appears from his ready and chearful undertaking of the work of our redemption. There can be little honour to any man in ſubmitting to what he cannot avoid, or doing what he dare not refuſe; but the humiliation of Chriſt was perfectly voluntary, as no conſtraint could be put upon him. Therefore his original dignity and greatneſs, is not only, if I may ſpeak ſo, preſerved unhurt, but improved and heightened by the grace of infinite condeſcenſion. This circumſtance of Chriſt's readineſs to undertake the work of our redemption, is often taken notice of in ſcripture, Pſal. xl. 6, 7, 8. "Sacrifice and offering thou didſt not deſire, mine ears haſt thou opened; burnt-offering and ſin-offering haſt thou not required. Then ſaid I, Lo I come; in the volume of thy book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God!"—It is certain, that redemption could not

be the work of a creature; and it is alſo probable, that no created being would have been willing to eſſay it. Nay, it is thought by many to be the import of the remarkable paſſage juſt now cited, which is applied by the apoſtle Paul to our Saviour, that in the counſels of heaven it was actually propoſed to thoſe glorious ſpirits that ſurround the throne of God, and their ſtrength and inclination both were found inſufficient. Neither is there any thing improbable in the ſuppoſition, that God might diſcover to them his purpoſe of mercy, upon a proper mediator interpoſing, and that none was found willing to ſubject himſelf to divine wrath, incurred by rebellious man. If ſo, then it is not only in one ſenſe, but in all ſenſes true, what Chriſt is repreſented as ſaying in the fifth verſe of the chapter where my text lies, "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought ſalvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me." This interpretation may be confirmed by ſomething ſimilar to it, recorded, John vi. 5, 6. "When Jeſus then lift up his eyes, and ſaw a great company come unto him, he ſaith unto Philip, Whence ſhall we buy bread that theſe may eat! And this he ſaid to prove him: for he himſelf knew what he would do." There is another paſſage which gives us nearly the ſame idea, viz. of Chriſt's being only capable of taking the charge of the redeemed and their intereſts in providence, Rev. v. 2, 3, 4, 5. "And I ſaw a ſtrong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to looſe the ſeals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the

earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much becauſe no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders ſaith unto me, Weep not; behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof." How glorious then was the compaſſion of our Redeemer, who ſo willingly and cheerfully ſubjected himſelf to that abaſement and ſuffering, to which none could conſtrain him? Thus he ſays of himſelf, John x. 17, 18. " Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." He is not repreſented as merely conſenting, becauſe none elſe could or would perform the work, and ſo having it as it were devolved upon him by neceſſity; not as yielding with reluctance, and overcome by great earneſtneſs and importunity, but ſaying with readineſs and chearfulneſs, " Lo, I come; in the volume of the book, it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart."

There is one circumſtance which deſerves particular notice, when we are conſidering the dignity of our Redeemer's undertaking; that he did well and thoroughly underſtand the difficulty of it, and the weight of that wrath which he ſubmitted to endure. It is not ſuch an evidence of greatneſs of mind, when a perſon involves himſelf in difficulties, and expoſes himſelf to dangers, if he only runs an

uncertain risk of meeting with them, or has but a confused and indistinct apprehension of their nature; but it discovers a peculiar fortitude of spirit to have a clear view of sufferings, and yet composedly and steadily to submit to them for a good end. So true is this maxim, that it seems to be the only thing that renders human life supportable, that all future sufferings are uncertain even in the event, and, at any rate, in their nature but imperfectly known. Now, how does it serve to illustrate the glory of our Redeemer's undertaking, that he had a clear and perfect foreknowledge of every event that was to befal him? He knew the number and malice of the enemies he had to encounter; and the bitterness of that cup, the dregs of which he was to drink off: Yet steady in his purpose, and conscious of his own power, he went out to the combat as one assured of victory. As he began, so he carried on his work, with the same undaunted resolution; witness what he says, Luke xii. 50. "But I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" All this, my brethren, is further confirmed, by some passages which are recorded toward the close of his life, when he drew near to the concluding scene of his sufferings. Matth. xvi. 21. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."—xx. 17, 18, 19. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes,

and they ſhall condemn him to death. And ſhall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock and to ſcourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he ſhall riſe again." Luke ix. 51. "And it came to paſs, when the time was come that he ſhould be received up, he ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem." To theſe I ſhall only add, John xviii. 11. "Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter, Put up thy ſword into the ſheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" Thus did there appear a glory even in his humiliation, a majeſty even in his ſuffering; and thus did he come forth and travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

In the 2*d* place, The glory of our Redeemer, in his humiliation, appears from the greatneſs of thoſe ſufferings which he endured. Though to the eye of ſenſe, a ſtate of ſuffering is apt to appear contemptible; to thoſe who juſtly view the ſufferings of Chriſt, there will be found far greater evidences of his power. A weak perſon is cruſhed by a ſmall weight; but he who is able to endure uncommon ſufferings, ſhows himſelf to be poſſeſſed of uncommon ſtrength. Now, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour did, in his life, in this world, endure the greateſt and moſt dreadful ſufferings. His whole life was one continued track of the heavieſt ſufferings of which human nature is capable. Iſa. liii. 3. "He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not!" This, my brethren, is a known ſubject, yet it is the ſubject which we ought, by faith to dwell upon this day; and, indeed, the benefit and

comfort of believers does not depend on things new and engaging to the fancy, but on the Spirit of God ſetting home known truths with force and efficacy on the heart. Let me therefore beg your attention to two or three obvious remarks on the ſufferings of Chriſt. 1. His afflictions began early, with his firſt entrance into the world. No ſooner did the man Chriſt Jeſus ſee the light of this world, but preſently did affliction ſalute him. Immediately after his contemptible birth, did Herod, that bloody tyrant, ſeek to deſtroy him; ſo that we may allude to that expreſſion, Rev. xii. 4. "And the dragon ſtood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as ſoon as it was born."

2. His afflictions were conſtant and perpetual, without interruption. It is recorded, not only by Chriſtians, but even by heathens, who had heard of his life, that he was never obſerved to laugh, but frequently ſeen weeping; ſo that he well accompliſhed that prophecy, "A man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief." It is probable, from ſeveral paſſages in the prophetical writings, that he was of a very tender and ſenſible frame: and therefore his afflictions had a great and powerful effect upon him. They ſo deeply touched him, that his body was waſted, and his ſtrength melted and decayed, which is the uſual effect of laſting and continued ſorrow. Iſa. lii. 14. "As many were aſtonied at thee; his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men." Pſal. xxii. 14, 15. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midſt of my bowels: my ſtrength is dried up

like a potſherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou haſt brought me into the duſt of death." So we may alſo apply to him what Job ſays of himſelf, Job xvi. 8. " And thou haſt filled me with wrinkles, which is a witneſs againſt me: and my leanneſs riſing up in me, beareth witneſs to my face."

3. His afflictions were of the ſevereſt kind. This I might ſhew you at large from the hiſtory, by particulariſing them all: I only mention four, poverty, reproach, temptation, and ſympathy with others. He was ſo poor, as to depend upon the charity of others for his ſubſiſtence; and could ſay, Luke ix. 58. " Foxes have holes and birds of the air have neſts, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."—Reproach was thrown upon him without meaſure, and of the worſt kind. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber, a deceiver, a blaſphemer, a Samaritan, and one that had a devil. Now, my brethren, all that know any thing of human nature, know that reproach and contempt are perhaps the hardeſt to bear of any ſufferings to which we are expoſed; and the authors of theſe calumnies were ſuch whoſe circumſtances rendered them moſt ſharp and ſevere; for they were the Scribes and Phariſees, or the miniſters of thoſe times, who ſerved in the temple, as the whole hiſtory ſhows, and his own natural relations, as appears from Mark iii. 21. John vii. 3, 4, 5.—Another remarkable affliction our Lord endured, was temptation, and that of the groſſeſt kind, as is plain from Matth. iv. 3.—11. We are told, " he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin." What was the preciſe nature and influence of ſuch temptations on him, we

cannot know; only it deſerves notice on this particular, that whereas ſome of the other afflictions he endured, were ſuch as his perfect purity could not but render more tolerable than otherwiſe they would have been, this on the other hand, was ſuch, that by how much the more pure and holy he was, ſo much the more diſtreſs would he feel on being aſſaulted with the vile temptations of the devil, and having his horrid and abominable ſuggeſtions preſented to the fancy.——I only further mention his ſufferings, from ſympathy with others. The moſt excellent and worthy of the human kind are ſuch as have the tendereſt feeling of the ſufferings of others. Now, ſince he was a perfect man, ſince tenderneſs ſeems to have been his ruling character, and his errand into the world a meſſage of love flowing from infinite compaſſion as its cauſe, we muſt ſuppoſe him liable to the ſevereſt ſufferings of this kind. I know the hard-hearted, ſelfiſh world, will find it difficult to conceive this as a ſource of ſevere ſuffering, eſpecially ſuch as have no regard to any thing beyond this world. But this is not the caſe with all; for I am certain there are ſome whoſe ſharpeſt pangs have been occaſioned by the ſufferings of others, eſpecially when of a ſpiritual kind. To form ſome conception of this, let us imagine, what muſt be the anguiſh of a pious and affectionate parent, on the death of a wicked child, who apparently trod in the path of the deſtroyer, and of whom he hath the greateſt reaſon to fear, that he no ſooner cloſed his eyes on the light of this world, than he lifted them up in the torments of hell. Now, as compaſſion was ſtronger in none than in the man Chriſt Jeſus,

ſo none could have ſo clear a view of the miſery of thoſe who were the objects of it; and therefore, no doubt, this was a ſource of the deepeſt affliction to his ſoul.

4. In the laſt place, the afflictions of our Lord not only continued, but increaſed, through his life, till they, at laſt iſſued in an extraordinary conflict with the powers of darkneſs, and an immediate ſubjection to the wrath of a ſin avenging God. Let it be obſerved, that though I here mention particularly his enduring the wrath of God, as the laſt and finiſhing part of his ſufferings, I do not mean to confine his ſufferings from the hand of God to this ſeaſon. Without all queſtion, every part of his humiliation was ſatisfactory to the divine juſtice, and contributed to appeaſe the wrath of God. This cup was put to his mouth ſo ſoon as he aſſumed our nature; he continued to drink of it daily, and was therefore juſtly ſtyled a man of ſorrows; but, in the cloſe of life, he came to drink off the very bittereſt dregs of it. The waves of divine wrath went over him; and he waded ſtill deeper and deeper in this troubled ocean, till he was well nigh overwhelmed. That Chriſt ſuffered under the wrath of God in an eminent degree, is manifeſt both from the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and the relation given of the event in the New. Iſa. liii. 5,—10. "But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not

his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, becauſe he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him: he hath put him to grief: when thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand." See the relation of his ſufferings in the garden, Matth. xxvi. 38, 39. "Then ſaith he unto them, My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, ſaying, O my Father! if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Mark xiv. 33, 34, 35, 36. "And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be ſore amazed, and to be very heavy, and ſaith unto them, My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful unto death! tarry ye here, and watch: and he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were poſſible the hour might paſs from him. And he ſaid, Abba, Father, all things are poſſible unto thee: take away this cup from me: nevertheleſs, not what I will, but what thou wilt." Luke xxii. 43, 44. "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening him; and, being in

an agony, he prayed more earneſtly; and his ſweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

That the ſame deep diſtreſs of ſoul continued upon the croſs, is plain from this lamentable exclamation, Matth. xxvii. 46. "And, about the ninth hour, Jeſus cried with a loud voice, ſaying, Eli, Eli, lama ſabachthani! that is to ſay, My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" In what manner, preciſely, Chriſt ſuffered the wrath of God on this occaſion, it would be too bold for us to determine; whether it was only God's withdrawing from his human ſoul the comforts of his ſenſible preſence—his being aſſaulted and diſtreſſed with the infernal ſuggeſtions of the devil—his having a lively picture preſented to his imagination of the miſeries of mankind here and hereafter, on account of ſin, and ſuffering with them by compaſſion and ſympathy—or, finally, God's poſitively inflicting upon him, for a ſeaſon, the ſame puniſhment in kind, at leaſt, if not in degree, that ſhould have befallen thoſe for whom he ſuffered, and which the impenitent ſtill ſhall for ever endure. This laſt is by ſome ſuppoſed impoſſible and contradictory, as much of their miſery ariſes from an evil conſcience, from which he was abſolutely free; and from deſpair of mercy, which none will affirm that even God's deſertion of him at that awful ſeaſon did imply. It is probable, there was a mixture of all theſe particulars in his mingled cup. And, as to the laſt, I ſhall only ſay, that the pain and anguiſh, that follows any reflection of a rational ſoul, is only connected with it by the determination of God, the Creator of our ſpirits;

therefore it was certainly in the power of the Almighty to inflict a ſenſe of pain in any kind, or in any degree, on the holy created ſoul of the man Chriſt Jeſus. And I ſee no other contrariety to the divine perfections, in inflicting that very anguiſh on the holy and innocent Saviour, than in ſubſtituting him in our room at all, and bruiſing him for our iniquities. One thing is certain, that, in his life, and at his death, he ſuffered what was a full reparation of the diſhonour done to God; a ſufficient vindication of the purity of his nature, and the authority of his broken law, and what purchaſed pardon and peace, ſanctification, and eternal glory to a whole world of elect ſinners.—And now, my brethren, from this view, did not our Redeemer travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength? Was it a ſmall ſtrength that could go through all this track of ſuffering, without ſinking in the way? Yet this did he with unſhaken conſtancy; and as his giving up his life was the laſt part of it, ſo he expired not, before he could ſay, IT IS FINISHED! Well then might the anſwer be given to the queſtion in my text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength?* in the words that follow, "I that ſpeak in righteouſneſs, mighty to ſave."

We proceed to obſerve in the 3*d* place, That the glory of our Redeemer in his ſufferings, appears from the purity of his carriage, and the perfection of his patience under them. The former conſideration ſhows his natural ſtrength, (ſo to ſpeak) and this his moral excellence. Affliction is the touch-

ſtone of virtue, tries its ſincerity, and illuſtrates its beauty. Therefore we are told, Heb. ii. 10. "That it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings." Nothing could give a greater value to the ſacrifice he offered up, than the meekneſs and patience with which he reſigned that life which was not forfeited, but voluntarily ſurrendered. Iſa. liii. 7. "He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth." It is worth while to reflect on that continued and invincible patience with which he went through the ſeveral ſteps of his ſufferings: that reproach and calumny, that contempt and abuſe, which he met with from thoſe in whoſe intereſt he was ſo deeply engaged, did not excite his indignation, but his compaſſion. Luke xix. 41. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." When his ignorant diſciples would have defended him from the aſſaults of his enemies, he ſays, John xviii. 11.—"The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" When he entered upon the laſt and heavieſt part of his ſufferings, and began to feel their anguiſh, he ſays, John xii. 27. "Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour! but for this cauſe came I unto this hour." And in that dreadful

ſeaſon, when in the midſt of his hardeſt conflict, this is the form of his prayer, Matth. xxvi. 39. "O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me: nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And a little after, verſe 42. "O my Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Was not this divine glory ſhining through the dark cloud that encompaſſed him? Was not this the patience of a God? And, in ſpite of the ſhame of the croſs, on which he hung, did it not conſtrain the centurion that attended his crucifixion, to ſay, "Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this man was the Son of God!"

In the laſt place, The glory of a ſuffering Saviour appears from the end he had in view in his ſufferings, and which he ſo effectually obtained. This was none other than the glory of the great God, and the everlaſting ſalvation of elect ſinners. It was to do the will of his heavenly Father that he came into the world, and in doing this he delighted. Towards the cloſe of his life he thus addreſſes his Father, John xvii. 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do." He not only exhibited a fair and bright image of the divine glory in his perſonal character, while he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, but in his work, as Mediator, illuſtrated all the perfections of God; and in particular, glorified his juſtice and magnified his mercy. If therefore a worthy end beautifies and ennobles any difficult undertaking, this excellent purpoſe muſt give dignity to a crucified Saviour.

But ought we not to add, the end ſo cloſely connected with this, the ſalvation of periſhing ſinners? Is not this a deſign, of the beauty of which we ought to be particularly ſenſible? Had not our compaſſionate Redeemer ſtept in between us and the ſtroke of divine juſtice, we had for ever lain under the wrath of the Almighty. And, Oh, how unable had we been to bear that vengeance which was ſo heavy to him! How glorious does he appear to the convinced ſinner in his red apparel! and what reaſon has he to ſay, "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing!"

I ſhall now conclude this head, with obſerving, that I have all along conſidered Chriſt as God and man in one perſon, our Mediator. I am ſenſible, however, he could only ſuffer in his human nature, and indeed became man that he might be capable of ſuffering. But it was the inconceivable union of the human nature with the divine, from which he derived his glory, which gave him ſtrength for ſuffering, and made his ſufferings of value ſufficient for the purchaſe of our redemption.

I come now in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1ſt, We are here called to admire and adore the unſearchable wiſdom, and unſpeakable love of God. There is a boundleſs depth in all the works and ways of God, and particularly here. Upon a ſlight view, we may be apt to take offence at the croſs; to hide our faces from him; to be diſguſted at an incarnate God, the Lord of glory, deſpiſed and trampled on by a proud Phariſee; the Creator of the

ends of the earth ſtanding at the judgment-ſeat of a weak mortal; and the Author of life giving up the ghoſt. But, upon a nearer inſpection, muſt we not admire the harmony of the divine attributes in our redemption upon this plan? that theſe perfections, which ſeem to limit each other in their exerciſe, ſhould be, in conjunction, more illuſtriouſly diſplayed: that God's infinite holineſs and abhorrence of ſin, nay, his impartial juſtice, ſhould be more diſplayed in the pardon than the condemnation of the ſinner: that ſo ſignal a defeat ſhould be given to the enemy of ſouls, even when he ſeemed exulting in the ſucceſs of his deſigns: that our Lord, by death, ſhould deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and by being lifted up from the earth, as unworthy of a place on it, he ſhould draw all men unto him, joining thus the extremities of glory and baſeneſs, power and humiliation, and travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength. This, without doubt, ſhall afford ſubject for the adoring enquiry of glorified ſaints to eternal ages; and we ought to begin it here, ſaying with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxii. 17. "His name ſhall endure for ever: his name ſhall be continued as long as the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in him: all nations ſhall call him bleſſed!"

2*dly*, Suffer me to improve the ſubject, by ſhewing the guilt and danger of all who are not reconciled to God, eſpecially thoſe, who, by continuing in unbelief and impenitence, ſhall die in that condition. There is nothing we can more juſtly infer from what hath been ſaid, than the holineſs of God, and his deteſtation of ſin. Such is the hardneſs of heart of many ſinners, and ſuch their partiality to

themſelves, that it is a matter of the utmoſt difficulty to convince them either of their guilt or danger. But, if you have any belief in the truths of the goſpel, if you believe the certainty of that tranſaction which we are this day to commemorate, with what fear and trembling ought you to reflect upon the juſtice of God? If he puniſhed ſin ſo ſeverely in the perſon of his own Son, how ſhall he puniſh it in the perſons of the finally impenitent? If a temporary ſuffering of the wrath of God was ſo terrible to him, who travelled through it in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall lie under it to eternity, without the leaſt ray of hope or conſolation? what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall have nothing to ſupport them in their unchangeable abode, but an accuſing conſcience, and deſpair of mercy?

I cannot help obſerving, hear it, O ſinners, and tremble! that a deſpiſed goſpel ſhall be an aggravation of the guilt, and an addition to the miſery of all to whom it was offered, Heb. ii. 2. "For, if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward, how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?"—Heb. x. 28, 29. "He that deſpiſed Moſes' law died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?" The ſeverity of the puniſhment of ſinners rejecting the goſpel ſhall bear a juſt

proportion to the love and mercy of God manifeſted in that diſpenſation. If theſe are juſtly called unſpeakably great, the other muſt be inconceivably dreadful. Every drop of that blood, which was ſpilt in behalf of ſinners, ſhall be as oil to the flames, that conſume the impenitent, and make them burn with greater fierceneſs, to all the ages of eternity. Remember, I beſeech you, that our Saviour ſhall continue in the character of adminiſtrator of the covenant of grace, till the final doom of ſinners be ordained. The ſame perſon, whoſe ſoul was made an offering for ſin, and who groaned on Calvary, ſhall one day come in his own and in his Father's glory, attended with his angels, as the miniſters of his juſtice; then "every eye ſhall ſee him, and thoſe alſo that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of him." Then how ſhall his enemies ſtand before him, when thoſe who came to apprehend him fell to the ground at his word, even in his humiliation? Thoſe who obſtinately refuſe to be the trophies of his grace ſhall then be the monuments of his vengeance. It is very remarkable, that as the nation of the Jews were a people uncommonly favoured of God, particularly by the enjoyment of the perſonal miniſtry of Chriſt, and hearing the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; ſo when they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities by rejecting him, the judgment that fell upon them was the moſt ſignal, and terrible, and laſting, that ever was inflicted on any people. In this they were an example of the fate of a whole world of ſinners; and, indeed, the deſtruction of Jeruſalem is deſcribed in ſuch terms as do naturally ſuggeſt to us

the final judgment of the world, and teach us what to expect, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now the Saviour is in the posture of an humble supplicant, standing at the door of many hard hearts, and knocking and asking admission. Now does he earnestly beseech you, by his mercies, to be reconciled to God; but then shall he put on the frowns and terrors of a judge; and how shall they be able to lift up their eyes towards him, who now trample upon his love? See a representation of this matter, Rev. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together: and every mountain and island were moved out of their places: and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" It is remarkable, that the wrath here spoken of, is called *the wrath of the Lamb*. Strange expression indeed! but strongly signifying, that his present meekness, and patience, and suffering, shall inflame and exasperate his future vengeance. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, I would beseech every sinner in this assembly, to consider the things that belong to his peace, that the same strength

and power of our Redeemer, that was evident in his ſuffering in our ſtead, that is evident in working out the ſalvation of his own people, ſhall alſo be evident in the judgment of his enemies. Pſal. ii. 11, 12. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

In the 3*d* place, I would improve this ſubject for the encouragement of ſinners to return to God through Chriſt. It was for this very end that God laid help upon One that is mighty, and raiſed up a choſen One out of the folk. Is there, then, among you, an awakened ſinner, who trembles at the proſpect of divine wrath, upon whoſe heart God, in his mercy, has carried home a conviction of his loſt ſtate, and who is crying out, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* Behold, here, the peace-ſpeaking blood of the Lamb of God! Behold, here, not only your ranſom paid, and juſtice fully ſatisfied, but a powerful, an almighty Saviour, able to ſave to the uttermoſt, all that come unto God by him! He has gone through his work, in the greatneſs of his ſtrength: He hath foiled your ſpiritual enemies, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in his croſs, My brethren, there is the greater need earneſtly to intreat your attention to this, that a ſlothful deſpondency, and diffidence of ſucceſs, is what keeps many ſinners from a hearty return to God. There is more of this in the hearts of many than they themſelves are aware of: I do not mean deſpair of mercy alone, but deſpair of reco-

very from a ſtate of ſin, of deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and attaining to the diſpoſition and character of God's children. Are there not many of you, my brethren, who, though you, in ſome meaſure, ſee the excellence and happineſs of a ſtate of favour with God, and holy conformity to his will, yet finding how ſtrongly you are wedded to the world, and its ſinful enjoyments, and knowing, by experience, the unſucceſsfulneſs of former reſolutions taken on in your own ſtrength, you have no hope of ſucceſs, and ſo, in a ſullen obſtinacy, refuſe to attempt what you think you cannot accompliſh? Do you not ſee, from what hath been ſaid, both your former error, and what is now the proper cure? You can do nothing of yourſelves; but through Chriſt ſtrengthening you, you may do all things. He is an almighty Saviour: He is ſtronger than the ſtrong man who detains you in bondage: he is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and let the priſoners go free. Wherefore I beſeech you, my dear friends, as you value your everlaſting intereſt, that you do not ſit ſtill and periſh, but ariſe and be doing, and the Lord will be with you.

In the *4th* place, The ſame inſtruction, with little difference, may be given to the people of God. As ſelf-righteouſneſs, and ſelf-confidence, are the ruling characters of the unregenerate; ſo they are diſeaſes never entirely cured in this world even in the beſt, and lamentably prevalent in many of God's own children. As their work is to obtain a victory over their corruptions, and grow in the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace, they often attempt both theſe too much in their own ſtrength. As the natu-

ral and unavoidable conſequence of this, they meet with frequent diſappointments; theſe make them ready to ſit down in ſlothful careleſſneſs, and decline the ſtruggle to which they find themſelves unequal, nay, too often not without ſecret murmurings and complaints againſt God, as a hard maſter, requiring bricks, and giving no ſtraw; inſtead of concluding, from their unſucceſsfulneſs, that they muſt have taken their meaſures wrong, they conclude the attempt itſelf to be vain, and the work impracticable. But, my brethren, here is a truth, which not only the word of God every where teaches, but which almoſt every part of his providence towards us is intended to ratify, *that in us dwelleth no good thing;* that we can hardly have too low an opinion of our own worth, or our own ſtrength; but at the ſame time, that God is able and willing to perfect ſtrength in our weakneſs. He is able to uphold the weakeſt ſelf-denied Chriſtian in the midſt of the moſt dangerous temptations, though he often ſuffers the ſelf-ſufficient to fall before his enemies. Wherefore, my dear friends, believe in the Almighty power of your Redeemer; and I hope you will know to your experience, that "he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaſeth ſtrength."

In the 5*th* place, Suffer me to improve this ſubject for the comfort and refreſhment of every diſconſolate and mourning ſoul. As weary and heavy laden ſinners are the perſons to whom the call of the goſpel is addreſſed, ſo ſurely it alſo ſpeaks peace to weary and heavy laden ſaints. This world was plainly deſigned as a place of trial and diſcipline, and not of

complete reſt to the children of God. It often pleaſes him in his ſovereign and holy providence, not only to afflict them with outward trials, but to hide his face from them, and viſit them with diſtreſs of ſoul. May not all ſuch ſee, from what has been ſaid, that they are but conformed to their Redeemer; that they are but treading in the path which he hath ſanctified? and is it not "enough for the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and for the ſervant that he be as his Lord?" It would be a great point gained, if we could but be convinced, that afflictions are what we muſt look for, and ſo not haſtily and raſhly conclude, that he is "rebuking us in his wrath, and chaſtening us in his hot diſpleaſure." Is it not comfortable, and is it not true, that Chriſt hath taken away the ſting of death, and of every ſuffering from his people, and left nothing but that correction which is healthful and neceſſary? Above all, ought you not to look to the power of your Redeemer, and his almighty ſtrength, as ſufficient to ſupport you now, and at laſt work your complete deliverance? Baniſh every thought that tends to repreſent your caſe either as ſingular, to abate your ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, or as deſperate, to weaken your hands in ſeeking relief; and make your requeſt to God, "with ſtrong crying and tears, that he, as the God of hope, would fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory."

6th, I ſhall now conclude all with an earneſt invitation to all intending communicants, to come to the table of the Lord, and by faith to feed upon the rich entertainment that is there provided for

them. See here the price of your redemption; the evidence and ſecurity of your pardon; the ſeal of God's love to you; and the certain pledge of every neceſſary bleſſing. "It pleaſed the Father, that in Chriſt ſhould all fulneſs dwell, and of his fulneſs you may all receive, and grace for grace." His body broken is the bread of life, that muſt nouriſh your ſouls to their everlaſting ſtate, his blood ſhed is a never failing cordial to a broken ſpirit, and a moſt excellent refreſhment to the ſoul that pants in a parched wilderneſs. May the Lord himſelf meet with us and bleſs us, viſit us with his gracious preſence, and make us joyful in his houſe of prayer. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

HEBREWS iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

WE ſee many myſterious things in the frame of nature, and the courſe of providence. But nothing can be more myſterious and wonderful than what we may often ſee in the ſtate of our own hearts. When there is no preſent ſoliciting temptation, and when we conſider, in a cool and deliberate manner, the conſequences of vice and wickedneſs, even barely from the dictates of natural conſcience, it ſeems ſurprizing, that in any inſtance, we ſhould yield to it; that we ſhould be induced to break the peace of our own minds, and provoke the vengeance of an almighty Judge; nay, to do ſo for a trifling, momentary, and uncertain ſatisfaction. But if it be unreaſonable to offend God at all, and to take but a few ſteps in the paths of ſin, how much more above meaſure aſtoniſhing is it, that men ſhould adhere to their former miſtakes, and ſhould not open their eyes

after repeated admonitions of their danger, and daily experience of their own folly!

I believe every body will be ſenſible, that many ſinners, even ſetting aſide the conſideration of ſome of the moſt important religious truths, act in a manner ſo directly oppoſite to their own preſent intereſt as is not to be accounted for, without ſuppoſing them under an amazing degree of blindneſs and infatuation. This is to be reſolved into *the deceitfulneſs of ſin*, a circumſtance on this great ſubject well worthy of our moſt ſerious attention.

In entering on the deceitfulneſs of ſin, let us reflect a little on the meaning of the expreſſion. Who is it that is deceived? It is the ſinner himſelf. Does he need to be deceived? Is there not in us all a ſtrong enough direct inclination to that which is evil, ready to burſt aſunder every reſtraining tie? There is ſo; and yet there is more in our danger than merely a propenſity to ſin. There is alſo a deceit and impoſition which over-reaches us, and enſnares us into the commiſſion of what, but for that miſtake, we would have avoided or abhorred. There is very frequent mention made of this in ſcripture; many cautions againſt being deceived; and indeed all ſin is repreſented as error and deluſion, in which—a deceived heart hath turned us aſide.

Again, If the ſinner is deceived, who is it, or what is it that deceives him? Here we muſt obſerve, that when we ſpeak of ſin's being deceitful, it is not ſo much any thing without us, taking the advantage of our weakneſs, but it is the effect and evidence of the ſtrength of corruption within us, which makes us ſee things in a wrong light, and draw unjuſt and

pernicious conſequences from them. Let us always remember, that the whole frame of nature, although it be the ſcene of temptation, and even the fuel of concupiſcence, is faultleſs in itſelf; nay, it preſents us every where with leſſons of piety and obedience to its Author. The miſtake here ariſes wholly from ourſelves. There is a remarkable difference between the deceitfulneſs of ſin and deceit of any other kind; in worldly tranſactions, the perſon deceived is never ſuppoſed unfaithful to himſelf, but is impoſed on by the ſuperior art and cunning of the deceiver. But it is otherwiſe in ſpiritual matters, where the deceitfulneſs of ſin is but another form of ſpeech for the corruption and treachery of our own hearts. It is true, in ſome inſtances of deluſion, there is an activity of outward agents, if I may ſpeak ſo, the devil and wicked men, who uſe no little induſtry to ſeduce others, and lie in wait to deceive; but this, if I miſtake not, does not belong properly to the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which lies in the diſpoſition of our own hearts, and is what lays us open to their ſnares.

I ſhall only further obſerve, by way of introduction, that this ſubject is equally applicable to good men and bad. Both ought to dread, and both ought to be warned of the deceitfulneſs of ſin; it betrays good men into diſtreſs, as well as bad men into ruin. In further diſcourſing on this ſubject, I ſhall,

I. Endeavour to open a little the chief branches of *the deceitfulneſs of ſin*.

II. Conſider the duty founded upon it, of *exhorting one another daily*.

III. Make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. then, I ſhall endeavour to open a little the chief branches of the deceitfulneſs of ſin: And I think the deceitfulneſs of ſin may be divided into theſe three general branches. 1. Its diſguiſing itſelf, and wholly concealing its nature. 2. Its forming excuſes for itſelf, and thereby extenuating its guilt. 3. Its inſinuating itſelf by degrees, and leading men on from the voluntary commiſſion of ſome ſins to the neceſſity of committing more.

1. then, The deceitfulneſs of ſin appears from its diſguiſing itſelf, and wholly concealing its nature. Though the great lines of the law of God are written upon the conſcience in ſo ſtrong and legible characters, that it is difficult wholly to efface them; yet it is plain that men have often brought this about to a ſurpriſing degree. The Pſalmiſt David, ſenſible how often ſin is concealed from our own view, exclaims, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." What ingenious reaſonings do men often uſe with their own minds to prove the lawfulneſs of what inclination leads them to, either with reſpect to profit or pleaſure! When the heart pleads the cauſe, the underſtanding is a very favourable judge. Every one may find a great number of examples of this in his own experience, and may daily ſee the unhappy effects of it in others.

For the better illuſtrating of this truth, that ſin is often wholly concealed even from the man in whom it dwells, be pleaſed to attend to the following ob-

ſervations: (1.) Sometimes it ſhews itſelf in the prevalence of looſe principles. I am ſorry to ſay, that we live in an age in which infidelity, of the groſſeſt kind, is ſpreading its poiſon among all ranks and degrees of men. But why is it ſo readily entertained? Becauſe it either ſets men at liberty from the ties of conſcience, and a future reckoning altogether; or greatly narrows the extent, and weakens the obligations of the law of God. How ſweet and palatable to the corrupt mind is every thing that removes reſtraints, and ſuffers the ſinner to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the ſight of his own eyes! It is not reaſon, but inclination, that makes proſelytes to theſe deſtructive doctrines. The truth is, would you reaſon impartially, you would conclude, that the principles muſt be falſe, which tend to ſet men at eaſe in their crimes. When therefore the arguments in their favour are ſo eaſily admitted, we have juſt ground to affirm, that it is owing to the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

2. If we proceed from principles to practice, and from generals to particulars, we ſhall find how ſin diſguiſes itſelf, and hides its deformity from our view. It never appears in its own proper and genuine dreſs, nor loves to be called by its proper name. Thus exceſs and intemperance is called, and unhappily thought by many, a ſocial diſpoſition, and good fellowſhip. Pride and unchriſtian reſentment is called honour, ſpirit, and dignity of mind. Vain pomp, luxury, and extravagance, are ſtyled taſte, elegance, and refinement. Sordid avarice and love of money, calls itſelf prudence, frugality, and good management. Levity, folly, and even obſcenity, is often called innocent liberty, chearfulneſs, and good hu-

mour. So great is the deceit, and ſo ſecure does the ſin lie under its diſguiſe, that a miniſter may preach with the utmoſt ſeverity againſt theſe ſeveral vices, and the guilty perſons hear with patience or approbation, and never once think of applying it to themſelves.

This deceit diſcovers itſelf alſo by its counterpart. How common is it to ſtigmatize and diſparage true piety and goodneſs by the moſt opprobrious titles. Tenderneſs of conſcience, is by many reproached under the character of preciſeneſs and narrowneſs of mind. Zeal againſt ſin, and fidelity to the ſouls of others, is called ſourneſs, moroſeneſs and ill-nature. There was never yet a faithful reprover from Lot, in Sodom to the preſent day, but he ſuffered under the reproach and ſlander of thoſe who would not be reclaimed. I might eaſily run over many more inſtances in both theſe kinds; for, to ſay the truth, the whole ſtrain of faſhionable converſation is often nothing elſe but an illuſion put upon the mind, that it may loſe its horror of vice; and it is greatly to be lamented, that this is done with ſo much ſucceſs. In many caſes, young perſons eſpecially are inſpired with a hatred and averſion at true and undefiled religion, and that under the moſt plauſible pretences. Many, my brethren, there are who are far from thinking it themſelves, and yet fall under the denunciation of the prophet Iſaiah, v. 20,—24. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter. Wo unto them that are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight. Wo unto them that are

mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink: which juſtify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him. Therefore, as the fire devoureth the ſtubble, and the flame conſumeth the chaff, ſo their root ſhall be as rottenneſs, and their bloſſom ſhall go up as duſt; becauſe they have caſt away the law of the Lord of Hoſts, and deſpiſed the word of the Holy One of Iſrael."

3. But the higheſt degree of this branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, is, when it not only puts on a decent and lawful appearance, but aſſumes the garb of eminent piety and worth. There is nothing impoſſible in this. As Satan ſometimes transforms himſelf into an angel of light, ſo ſome of the greateſt ſins will take the name, and arrogate the honour of the moſt diſtinguiſhed virtues. I do not here mean the caſe of groſs hypocriſy; that is foreign from the preſent ſubject. Hypocrites know their own inſincerity well enough, and only put on an appearance of piety to deceive others. But even when there is no known or deliberate hypocriſy, ſin may inſinuate itſelf under the appearance of the moſt important duties. Men may indulge the moſt hateful paſſions with the greater liberty, when they think they are doing what is acceptable to God.

The croſs of our bleſſed Maſter is full fraught with inſtruction of every kind. It gives us particularly, a ſtriking example of what I have now ſaid. His enemies, who perſecuted him with unrelenting malice through his life, and at laſt prevailed to have him hanged on a tree, did it, (ſome no doubt from a pretended, but) many of them, from a miſguided

zeal for religion. He was crucified as a deceiver, and a blasphemer; and that in this they were misled, appears from the language of his prayer for them on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." What a conviction should this give us of the deceitfulness of sin, that the greatest sin that ever was committed on earth, was yet considered by the guilty as a duty!

Let us also consider our Saviour's remarkable prediction on the same subject, and how often it hath been fulfilled: John xvi. 2. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service." My brethren, think a little on the many dreadful persecutions which good men have endured for conscience sake; the terrible tortures they have been exposed to, in which the utmost invention of the human mind has been employed to aggravate their distress. Think in particular, of the horrible tribunal of Inquisition, which is to this day in full authority in countries not very distant; and does it not inspire you with the highest detestation of the bloody tyrants? But there is another reflection not so frequently made, yet at least equally proper. How great is the deceitfulness of sin in the human heart, that can make men suppose that such atrocious crimes are acceptable to God? Yet they certainly do so. Neither would it be possible for them so entirely to divest themselves of every sentiment of humanity, if they were not inflamed by the rage of bigotry and false zeal. Let not any imagine, that these are dreadful crimes, but which they are not in the least danger of. We ought to maintain the greatest watch-

fulneſs and jealouſy over our own ſpirits. It may very eaſily, and does very frequently happen, that an apparent zeal for religion is more than half compoſed of pride, malice, envy or revenge.

Nor is this all. In the above caſes, by the treachery of the human heart, ſins are changed into duties, and, in many others, every day, duties are changed into ſins, by the perverſion of the principle from which they ought to flow. Many a ſober temperate perſon oweth his regularity more to a luſt of gold, than to any ſenſe of duty, and obedience to God. The deſire of praiſe, or the fear of reproach, is many times a reſtraint more powerful than the apprehenſion of eternal judgment. Men may put one duty alſo in the place of another, and by that means convert it into ſin. Nay, with regard to all our duties, we may be tempted to place that truſt and dependence on them which is only due to our Redeemer's perfect righteouſneſs; and, inſtead of acts of obedience, make them idols of jealouſy before God.

How great then the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which is capable of puting on ſo many and ſo artful diſguiſes, and even to counterfeit true piety, which ſtands in the moſt immediate and direct oppoſition to it! There are more ways than I can poſſibly enumerate, by which men deceive themſelves, and become obſtinate and incorrigible in what is evil, by miſtaking it for what is good. Juſtly does the Apoſtle in this paſſage warn Chriſtians againſt being hardened; for if ſin can hardly be reſtrained, even by the moſt conſtant vigilance, and the moſt ſteady reſiſtance, what progreſs will it not make,

what ſtrength muſt it not acquire, when it is approved and cheriſhed, nay, when it is proſecuted with all that care and attention which ought to have been employed for its utter deſtruction?

2. In the ſecond place, The deceitfulneſs of ſin appears from its forming excuſes for itſelf, and thereby extenuating its guilt. That it is natural for ſinners to form excuſes for themſelves, and endeavour to extenuate their guilt, daily experience is a ſufficient proof. Nay, it is uſual to obſerve, how able and ingenious perſons, otherwiſe of no great capacity, are in this art; even children diſcover the greateſt quickneſs and facility in it, and are no ſooner challenged for any thing that is amiſs, than they are ready to produce an apology. The diſpoſition, indeed, ſeems to be hereditary, and to have been handed down to us from the firſt parents of the human race. On their being challenged for their diſobedience, each of them confeſſes the fact, but immediately adds an excuſe, Gen. iii. 11, 12, 13. "Haſt thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou ſhouldſt not eat? And the man ſaid, The woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God ſaid unto the woman, What is this that thou haſt done? And the woman ſaid, The ſerpent beguiled me, and I did eat." You will eaſily be ſenſible, that it is impoſſible for me to enumerate the ſeveral excuſes, or diſtinct alleviating circumſtances, that may be pleaded in favour of particular ſins, becauſe theſe are infinitely various. I intend, therefore, only to mention ſome of the chief conſiderations that are offered by pretended

reaſoners, or have a ſecret influence upon the mind of the ſinner; and which leſſen the impreſſion of the evil of ſin in general.

(1.) One excuſe, which, however weak, has no ſmall influence in ſetting men's minds at eaſe in the commiſſion of ſin, is no other than the commonneſs of it; and that there are multitudes of others in the like condition. It is wonderful to think what boldneſs ſinners often derive from this circumſtance, and how hard it is to perſuade them of the danger of what is common and generally practiſed. Even good men are often carried away with prevailing and epidemical ſins. We may take the illuſtration of this from any particular ſin. How ready are men to think, and even to ſpeak, in the following manner: If this be a ſin, I am ſure I am not ſingular in it; there are many others guilty as well as I. They ſeem to look upon the practice of others, as a ſort of ſupport and juſtification of their own conduct.

But, my brethren, I beſeech you to conſider how deluſive and dangerous theſe thoughts are to your immortal ſouls. If any credit is to be given to the ſcripture repreſentation, the human race in general is under guilt; and, therefore, the commonneſs, nay, the univerſality of any practice, is not ſufficient to give it a ſanction, as lawful and ſafe. Will the law of an unchangeable God be altered or abated in favour of his apoſtate creatures, becauſe of their number? Is there ſuch a number of offenders, as to be able to make head againſt their almighty Creator? Sometimes, indeed, the tranſgreſſors of human laws are ſo numerous, as to be formidable to their very judges; but no ſuch thing can take place here. Or

will it, in truth, be any conſolation to the ſufferers in hell, that they have ſociety in their torment? Were a great number of malefactors to be executed together, would this alleviate the puniſhment to any one of them? I apprehend it would rather increaſe it, ſince they would, in a good meaſure, feel each others ſufferings; as it certainly would add greater horror to the ſight. Wherefore, my dear brethren, I beſeech every one of you to conſider the neceſſity of reconciliation and peace with God, and that it is not leſs important and neceſſary to you, for the multitudes you ſee around you ſo faſt aſleep in ſecurity and ſloth.

(2.) Another excuſe that men often make for their ſins, is, that they are comparatively ſmall. When they ſee, think, or hear of the monſtrous and atrocious crimes of others, they are ready to bleſs themſelves in their ſecurity, and to reckon upon their leſs degree of guilt, as a ſpecies of innocence. Believe it, my brethren, I have found with concern, perſons in a dangerous ſickneſs, or the proſpect of death, taking comfort to themſelves, and mentioning, with much ſatisfaction, that they were not ſo bad as ſome others; that they had never committed this or the other heinous crime; that they had never done as this or the other deſperate profligate had done, with whom they were acquainted. To all ſuch we may juſtly apply the words of the apoſtle, 2 Cor. x. 12. "For we dare not make ourſelves of the number, or compare ourſelves with ſome that commend themſelves: but they, meaſuring themſelves by themſelves, and comparing themſelves amongſt themſelves, are not wiſe."

There is a wonderful propenſity in the proud ſpi-

rit of man, to gratify itſelf by compariſon with others. Compariſon, indeed, is the very fuel of pride; for of what are we proud, but of ſomething in which it is ſuppoſed we excel. Is there any thing more common in converſation, when any inſtance of the ſin or folly of others is narrated, than for the hearers, every one, to take the benefit of it to himſelf, and to ſay, I am ſure I ſhould never have done ſo and ſo, had I been in his caſe. Scarce any man finds fault with another for his conduct in his ſtation, without blazoning and diſplaying his own real or imagined excellence. I do not ſay, that good men are wholly free from this fault; yet, as the principles of ſin and grace are directly oppoſite, in general the ſame views that make a bad man proud, tend to make a good man humble. The groſs ſins of others, which incline careleſs perſons to glory, that they are free from the charge, often tend to diſcover to the Chriſtian the ſinfulneſs of his nature, which is capable of ſuch impiety. They fill him with humble adoration and thankfulneſs to that gracious God, who only maketh him to differ. He knows, that had he been left to himſelf, he might have exceeded the moſt abandoned profligate within the compaſs of his knowledge.

Let me therefore, my brethren, caution you and myſelf againſt all excuſes drawn from compariſon in any form. For, not to mention how ready we are to miſtake and be partial to ourſelves in making the compariſon; not to mention that though we were ever ſo impartial, as the hearts of others are not open to us, nor the motives of their conduct, we cannot make it with certainty; I only inſiſt, that all

compariſons, whether they be juſt or unjuſt, are unſpeakably pernicious. It is not your being better or worſe than others, that will juſtify you before God, or be the matter of inquiry at the laſt day. You will not then be aſked, whether you were as profane a blaſphemer as ſuch a perſon; as great a liar as another; as great a drunkard as another; as great a whoremonger as another. No. You muſt be weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, and all that are there found wanting, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire. You may leave it to a wiſe and righteous God to proportion the ſeverity of his judgment to the atrociouſneſs of the ſinner's guilt. But "except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." A man may be drowned in five fathom water, as well as in five thouſand; and therefore, let none fooliſhly flatter themſelves with the hope of ſecurity, even though they really ſee many (to ſpeak in the language of ſcripture) "tenfold more the children of hell than themſelves."

(3.) Sinners are apt to look for another ſource of excuſes for their ſins in themſelves. They are ſtrongly inclined to make a merit of any actions they have done that are materially good, and think that ſome indulgence is due to their faults and miſcarriages on that account. They ſet their good works and their faults, as it were, in oppoſite columns, as if they intended, in that manner, to ſtrike the balance. There is very much of this diſpoſition in the natural unenlightened mind. We find many ſentiments ſimilar to this in the heathen world. "Every man, ſays a certain author, has ſome virtues, and ſome faults; he that hath more virtues than faults, is a good man;

and he that hath more faults than virtues, is a bad man." I am ſenſible there might be ſome juſtice in ſuch a compariſon, after a perſon has really been brought to the ſervice of God upon genuine principles. It might then ſerve to ſhew whether God or the world hath moſt of our prevailing love, and our habitual ſervice. But this rule is highly pernicious, when an ignorant or vitious man endeavours to apply it: for firſt of all, theſe very actions which they ſuppoſe to be good, not flowing from a real principle of obedience to God, are falſely reckoned virtues in them. O that ſelf-righteous perſons would but faithfully examine the motives from which many of their boaſted virtues flow! The more they knew of themſelves, and their own real character, the leſs would they be inclined to glory in its excellence and perfection. It is certain, that even in the world, the more a man preſumes to commend himſelf, the leſs others are diſpoſed to eſteem him; and is it not ſtrange, that the ſelf-juſtification, which is inſufferable to our fellow-creatures, ſhould be the foundation of our hope before a holy and heart-ſearching God?

But, beſides, I beſeech your attention to the following circumſtance: even the falſe ſuppoſition juſt now mentioned, proceeds upon an abſolute miſtake of the nature of moral obligation. There is no proper merit in the obedience of a creature, neither hath it, in the leaſt degree, any title or tendency to extinguiſh the guilt of crimes. If eſteem, love, and obedience, all in the higheſt degree, be truly and properly due unto God, no reward can be pleaded for on account of the performance, much leſs can it

have the effect of procuring pardon where duty hath been neglected. Let me beg of you to reflect upon a matter of experience, which is but seldom attended to. Does the general goodness of a man's character incline even the world to indulge him in more bad actions than another? It does just the contrary. A man, who hath been eminent in piety during a long course of years, if he goes astray in any one instance, will be more deeply reproached, and his character will suffer more by it, I may even say, it will suffer an hundred-fold more for the same action, than the character of another whose conduct has been more imperfect and unequal.

I look upon it as the duty of a minister to bend his whole force against a disposition to self-righteousness. And, indeed, whether we take it from scripture or reason, we shall see that the hope of a sinner must arise not from extenuation, but confession; not from human merit, but from the divine mercy. This is so plain, that had men but any real and just convictions of their obligations and duty to God, such a plea would never come into their minds. Suppose any person were challenged for a debt which he was really owing, and he should answer in this manner, It is very true, I have not paid this; but I paid a debt to you at such a time, and another at such a time, and a third at such a time; would it not be natural for the other to reply, True indeed; but were not all these debts separately due? will your paying one discharge you from another? is not this as much due now as any of the rest were before? If therefore you will give the same justice to your Maker you expect from another, you must confess that a

whole life of perfect and ſpotleſs obedience would do juſt nothing at all to extinguiſh the guilt of the leaſt ſin. Be not therefore ſo fooliſh as to reſt your hope on that ſelf-righteouſneſs, which, in truth, is no better than filthy rags, and however excellent and perfect it were, could have no effect in procuring the forgiveneſs of ſin.

(4.) There are ſome to be found, who endeavour to excuſe their actual tranſgreſſions, as being no more than the neceſſary effects of original ſin. This we find frequently done by thoſe who are no friends to religion in general, and, perhaps, believe as little of the reality of original as the guilt of actual ſin. In ſuch, therefore, it is no more than a pretence, that they may rid themſelves of the apprehenſion of both. But there are alſo ſome who do not ſeem to be enemies in principle to the truths of the goſpel, who yet are very ready to excuſe themſelves for particular ſins by laying the blame upon their nature in general. It is my nature, they will ſay; I have ſo ſtrong a diſpoſition to it, that I cannot help it. Thus they ſeem to ſit quite eaſy under the dominion of ſin, and, by giving up all hope of overcoming it, are led to forbear all endeavours to reſiſt it.

On this I cannot help obſerving, again, how oppoſite the principles of ſin and holineſs are. The ſin of our nature, which, in true penitents, is matter of humiliation and ſorrow, is often produced by others, as an extenuation of their crimes. See how the Pſalmiſt David expreſſeth himſelf, Pſal. li. 5. "Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity; and in ſin did my mother conceive me." Theſe words were not

ſpoken by way of alleviation, but confeſſion and aggravation. In the ſame ſpirit does the apoſtle Paul ſpeak in a great part of the ſeventh chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans, particularly verſes 14—24. "For we know that the law is ſpiritual; but I am carnal, ſold under ſin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I conſent unto the law, that it is good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but ſin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is preſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but ſin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me: for I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?"

That there is ſomething myſterious in the firſt occaſion and conveyance of original ſin, on which captious perſons may raiſe cavils, to perplex themſelves and others, I readily allow. But after all they can ſay, it is certain, both from ſcripture and experience, that all actual ſin is not only perſonal but voluntary. Is there any perſon, who will dare to maintain, in the face of his ſupreme Judge, that he is laid under compulſion, or an irreſiſtible neceſſity, to think, ſpeak,

or do what is wrong? Does any man commit ſin, but from his own choice? Or is he hindered from the performance of any duty to which he is ſincerely and heartily inclined? If this were indeed the caſe, it would not be true, what we are told in the ſacred oracles, that God will be "juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when he judgeth."

I muſt alſo obſerve, that upon the plan of the goſpel, the force of this excuſe is entirely taken away; becauſe the renovation of our natures is there aſcribed to the power and energy of divine grace. Though we are not able to reform our natures, God is able to renew them. Though we cannot reſiſt corruption, God is able to ſubdue it. Our weak and helpleſs ſtate by nature, is ſo far from being a proper excuſe for ſin, that a juſt and humbling ſenſe of it is the very firſt ſtep towards a recovery. "Of ourſelves we are not able to do any good thing, but through Chriſt ſtrengthening us we may do all things." We are exhorted to pray for the influences of the Spirit, in the ſure hope of acceptance: "Aſk, and ye ſhall receive; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." So that, on the prevailing of ſin, we have juſt reaſon to take the whole blame upon ourſelves, and to ſay, "We are not ſtraitened in God, but ſtraitened in our own bowels."

(5.) In the laſt place, Some are bold enough to excuſe their ſins, as being only the effects of the irreſiſtible will of God, who hath decreed whatſoever comes to paſs; ſome in a more artful and covered way, and ſome more openly and explicitly, make uſe of God's abſolute predetermination of every event,

as taking away the guilt of their voluntary actions. This hath been a very old excuſe. It was the ſpirit of that language you find, Ezek. xxxiii. 10. "Therefore, O thou ſon of man, ſpeak unto the houſe of Iſrael, Thus ye ſpeak, ſaying, If our tranſgreſſions and our ſins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we then live?" The ſame thing is mentioned by the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix. 19. "Thou wilt ſay then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath reſiſted his will?" This infamous and blaſphemous excuſe is not only often made for particular ſins, but is made a pillow of ſloth in general, and ſinners lay themſelves aſleep upon it in ſecurity, ſaying, if it be the will of God they ſhould be ſaved, the event is infallible, let them take even ſo deſperate a courſe; and, if otherwiſe, it is impoſſible for them to oppoſe his irreſiſtible decree.

In order to oppoſe this profane perverſion of divine truth, let me put you in mind, what ſin and folly it muſt be in us, to ſet the nature of God at variance with his revealed will, or one declaration of his in oppoſition to another. It is from the ſcriptures alone that you learn God's ſupreme dominion and appointment of every event. And is it not certain, that the ſame ſcriptures do lay the guilt or ſinfulneſs of every action to the ſinner's charge? Does not God abſolutely refuſe, nay, in infinite condeſcenſion, he ſolemnly proteſts againſt having it imputed to himſelf. Let the guilty hear and tremble, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe

of Iſrael?" And, again, James i. 13. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Perhaps, ſome will ſay, we cannot reconcile the certainty of events with the freedom of actions, or the imputation of guilt. But what is this, but ſaying, we are not able to fathom or comprehend the perfections of an infinite God? And is this any cauſe of wonder? It would not be the true God, if you could ſearch him out; it would not be the Almighty, if you could find him to perfection. "It is higher than heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea."

Surely, my brethren, it is manifeſt, that the ſame God, to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the world, and who rules by his power for ever, hath eſtabliſhed a neceſſary connection between the means and the end, between cauſe and effect. And, as it would be altogether madneſs in common life, to ſit ſtill and forbear activity and diligence, under pretence of its being impoſſible to hinder or alter the will of God; ſo it is equally mad and impious, to lay the blame of our ſinful hearts and inclinations on the appointment of God. He can and doth control and over-rule, by his ſovereign providence, all his creatures and all their actions, in a ſubſerviency to his own glory; but, as to the ſinfulneſs of every deed, the ſinner alone is chargeable with it, and in the day of judgment, the ſinner alone muſt anſwer for it.

Before I proceed to the third branch of the de-

ceitfulneſs of ſin, I muſt beg your attention to a few obſervations on what hath been already ſaid. And,

1*ſt*, You may obſerve how various and involved, and how deep-laid, the excuſes for ſin are. The ways of the world, the general prevalence of ſin, and many of thoſe very circumſtances which ought to make us dread its influence, and fill us with abhorrence of it, are frequently made uſe of to extenuate its guilt. The corrupt inclination of our hearts, which is the ſource of all ſin, and may be ſaid to be the eſſence of ſin, is often made uſe of to excuſe or palliate its effects, as the badneſs of the tree for the ſourneſs of the grapes. How ill qualified are we to judge fairly on ſuch a ſubject? We are partial in our own cauſe, and give an unjuſt deciſion from our relation to the pannel. Down then with the reaſonings of the carnal mind. Suſpect them, dread them, ſhut your ears againſt them. What reaſon is there to ſit down in ſilence, and humbly acquieſce in the account given us of our character and ſtate by a God of infinite holineſs? There is no error to blind his judgment, no intereſt to bias his inclination, and there is no equal who may contend or enter into judgment with him.

2*dly*, You may ſee that the excuſes for ſin, are not only inſufficient, but deeply criminal. In the form they aſſume, they may appear plauſible; but, when they are ſtripped of their diſguiſe, they will appear to be horrible. The immediate pretence may appear to have nothing very atrocious in it; but when they are traced to their ſource, they will be found to take their riſe from the moſt malignant infidelity or atheiſm in the heart. You ſee, from what

has been said, that many excuses for sin, at last land in laying the blame upon God himself. All the encouragement we take in sin from the divine patience, all our abuse or perversion of the gifts of nature, or the course of providence, lands ultimately here. Let us therefore pray, that it may please God to open our eyes on the wonders of his law, on the riches of his grace, and the greatness of his power. Let us confess, that "to us belongeth shame and confusion of face; but to our God belongeth mercy." Let us adopt the words of the Psalmist, Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

3. I proceed now to the third and last branch of the deceitfulness of sin, viz. Its insinuating nature, by which it leads men on in an insensible manner, from one degree of wickedness to a higher, and after the voluntary commission of some sins, lays them under a sort of necessity of committing more. I think it is probable that the Apostle had this particularly in his view in the text, where he says, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And certain it is, my brethren, that wicked men do not see the whole course they are to run at one view, but are drawn in by little and little. Take the most abandoned sinner in this guilty world, and there was a time of his life when he would have trembled to think of the crimes which he afterwards committed. Thus Hazael, king of Syria, when he was told by the prophet Elisha, of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty he would be guilty of among the children of Israel, he could not believe so ill of himself, but

anſwered with a kind of abhorrence, "What! is thy ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do this great thing?" But ſuch is the nature of ſin, that it carries men away, if they yield to it, infinitely farther than they themſelves intended. We find this taken notice of by moral writers in every age and country. Many of the ancients uſed to repreſent it by a very expreſſive ſimilitude, viz. that the way of vice lies down hill; ſo that if you take but a few ſteps, the motion is ſoon accelerated, and becomes ſo violent and impetuous, that it is impoſſible for you to reſiſt it.

This is certainly a circumſtance, with reſpect to the nature of ſin, which lies at the foundation of practical religion, and to which I would particularly intreat the attention of the younger part of my audience. Neither is it unſuitable to perſons of any character, as it will contribute to enforce upon their minds, a ſenſe of the neceſſity of conſtant vigilance and of conſtant prayer. In order to repreſent the matter to you in the ſtronger light, I ſhall endeavour to lay before you ſome of the chief ſteps and gradations by which a ſinner is brought into a hardened ſtate; and ſhow how naturally, and in a manner neceſſarily, they lead him forward from one to another.

(1.) Men enter and initiate themſelves in a vitious practice by ſmaller ſins. Though every ſin hath that malignity in it that it deſerves God's wrath and curſe both in this life and that which is to come; yet there are ſome ſins, which, in themſelves, as well as from ſeveral circumſtances which attend them, are far more heinous in the ſight of God than others. Theſe are too alarming to the conſcience of a young

ſinner; and, therefore, he only ventures upon ſuch as are ſmaller at firſt. I hope you will not think it too minute or trifling, if I mention that every particular kind of vice creeps in this gradual manner. Many have begun to ſteal, with taking away things without their parents knowledge, from their own houſe, thinking there could be little fault in this; and then picked up ſmall things, perhaps from people of better rank, ſaying ſo themſelves, they will never be the worſe of it, they can eaſily ſpare it; but time has perfected them in their trade, till they ended their days upon a ſcaffold. Some have begun with little arts of equivocation, and concealing the truth, who, in time came to boldneſs and obſtinacy in groſs falſehood. And many have begun with levity of carriage, and vanity of dreſs, who have ended in luſt, whoredom, and open proſtitution. My brethren, though we are all born in ſin, and powerfully inclined to that which is evil, from our firſt entrance into the world; yet we have alſo a witneſs for God in our own conſciences. There ſeems to be ſome reluctance in the firſt commiſſion of ſin, ſome ſorrow and regret for departing innocence. It is a ſaying of one of the heathens, "No man becomes all of a ſudden very wicked;" or, if I may uſe the expreſſion, is made perfect in ſin. It uſually takes ſome time, and is carried on by progreſs and improvement, though ſome, alas! make wonderful proficiency in it, and advance at a very great pace. Theſe leſſer ſins, then, are the introduction and preparation for what afterwards ſhall follow; they begin the attack upon conſcience, which, at laſt, ends in a total overthrow and defeat.

(2.) Let us now follow the ſinner to the next ſtage of his unhappy courſe. Having once begun in the ways of ſin, he ventures upon ſomething greater and more daring; his courage grows with his experience; and he gives himſelf more liberty to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the ſight of his own eyes. Now ſins of a deeper dye do not look ſo frightful as before. The reaſon of this is plain, or rather there are many reaſons which concur in producing this effect. Cuſtom makes every thing familiar, even to deſpiſing the authority of God, and counteracting the ſtrongeſt obligations. Sinners, after ſome apprenticeſhip to this infamous trade, commit ſuch ſins as lay waſte the conſcience, and offer the greateſt violence to their own minds; theſe ſtill lead forward to others, and to every new tranſgreſſion, if I may ſpeak ſo, they are driven by a ſtronger inclination, and with-held by a weaker reſiſtance. No ſin comes by itſelf alone, but ſtands in cloſe connection with many others. Some ſins teach us how to commit others, as well as afford an opportunity to do it. I have heard of a ſervant who went into an appartment with no other intention than to gratify appetite, by making free with ſome ſweatmeats, but happening to ſee ſomething very valuable lying open, which might be eaſily concealed, could not reſiſt the temptation, but commenced thief, and came at laſt to a miſerable end. Many ſins alſo bring others after them, as excuſes to cover them. So that no perſon who once breaks over the limits of clear and unqueſtionable duty, knows how far he may be carried before he returns back, or rather whether he may not be ſo

deeply involved, as never to return at all. This leads me to obſerve,

(3.) That open ſins ſoon throw a man into the hands of ungodly companions. This effect is neceſſary, becauſe they determine his character; and according to the old obſervation, thoſe of like diſpoſition, by a natural and powerful inſtinct, are led to aſſociate together. No ſooner do men begin to take liberties in their conduct, than they begin to ſhun the ſociety of good men; the preſence of ſuch is a reſtraint upon them; their example is a reproof to them, and awakens any principle of conſcience, which yet remains unſubdued, to reproach and ſting them; whereas, in ſociety like themſelves, they are greatly emboldened, by ſeeing vice practiſed, and by hearing it juſtified. Behold the ſinner, then, with corrupt communication as well as corrupt inclination! The danger of this we are warned of by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 33. "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners." As united fires burn the fiercer and the ſtronger; ſo a ſinful ſociety improves and grows in impiety, and every member joins his brother's pollution to his own. It is not eaſy to ſay, how much profane companions are inſtrumental in reciprocally undoing one another. But ſurely if thoſe, otherwiſe virtuous, are often in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked, much more muſt they who are themſelves ſo diſpoſed, and are every whit as ready to follow a bad advice or example, as others are to give it.

I cannot forbear adding upon this ſubject, that ſeriouſly diſpoſed perſons are as much afraid of the

ſociety of looſe perſons, as they are impatient of theirs. This makes the ſeparation ſtill more complete. And even when they are occaſionally joined, the fear of caſting their pearls before ſwine, who may trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent them, often ſhuts their mouths. It prevents them from giving that ſalutary inſtruction, and uſeful admonition, which their heart might dictate, or the neceſſity of the caſe might require. I confeſs, my brethren, when I conſider the unſpeakable advantages for true piety, which ariſe from the relation, the company, or the friendſhip of eminent Chriſtians, it fills me with the deepeſt concern for thoſe unhappy perſons, who, by their conduct, and circumſtances, are neceſſarily deprived of every thing of this kind, nay, are daily expoſed to all the contrary ſnares. I dare ſay, not a few in this aſſembly will bear witneſs, as I deſire to do with inward gratitude to God, what infinite benefit ariſes from the ſociety of the excellent ones of the earth; to have been inſtructed and trained up by pious parents in the fear of God; to have had your lot caſt in a family which was a houſe of prayer; to have the faithful admonitions of a truly conſcientious friend; and to have the daily edifying, reſtraining, comforting, animating example of an eminent Chriſtian, as well as a ſhare in his fervent prayers. Nay, I will ſay more, the very precious remembrance of ſuch, after they have entered into reſt, whether parents, children, friends, or neighbours, has the nobleſt and happieſt effect in reproving our ſloth, and ſtirring us up to be "followers of them, who, through faith and patience, do now inherit the promiſes." How

miſerable thoſe who are wholly ignorant of every ſuch privilege! How deceitful is ſin, which daily adminiſters the moſt deadly poiſon, and, at the very ſame time, cloſes up the way on every ſide, and debars the infected victim from every mean that might contribute to his cure!

(4.) In the next ſtage, the ſinner begins to feel the force of habit and inveterate cuſtom. The frequent repetition of acts of ſin conſtitutes a habit. How powerful this is, and hard to be overcome, experience is a daily ſtanding proof. We are warned of the danger of habitual wickedneſs in many paſſages of ſcripture, particularly Jer. xii. 5. "If thou haſt run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canſt thou contend with horſes? and if, in the land of peace, wherein thou truſtedſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the ſwelling of Jordan?" Chap. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil." Nature itſelf, in this, as in many other inſtances, is full of ſpiritual inſtruction. Habits of any indifferent kind, when once eſtabliſhed, can hardly be overcome even by the greateſt effort of reſolution: even any motion of the body, or any particular word or phraſe in diſcourſe, if once they have taken place by cuſtom, are hardly ever laid down. But, it muſt be obſerved, that habits of ſin are not only infinitely more hurtful than habits of a common kind, but they are alſo much more obſtinate. They fall in with the bent and diſpoſition of corrupt nature; and, therefore, are like a double cord, not eaſily broken.

Behold then the ſinner rooted and ſettled in an evil way! Before, it might have been expected, that an awful diſpenſation of providence, or the convincing demonſtration of the word of God, might have had an effect upon him; but now, though it is ſtill poſſible, it becomes leſs and leſs probable. A tree, when it is newly planted, may be eaſily removed, or may be overturned by a blaſt of wind; but when once it has ſpread its roots in the ground and long kept its poſſeſſion, the moſt violent tempeſt may bend its top a little, but cannot ſhake its firm foundations. So the ſinner, that has long been habituated to wickedneſs, and confirmed by a long courſe of time, will ſtand even the ſtorms of affliction, and if they do bend his haughty ſpirit, yet they will not break his ſtubborn heart. I do not mean to ſet bounds to the almighty power and ſovereign grace of God. He no doubt may, and in ſome inſtances, has plucked the moſt advanced ſinners as brands out of the fire. But theſe inſtances are few and uncommon, for ſome of the great ends of his government. It is not the ordinary way of his dealing with us: and he hath ſufficiently warned us againſt truſting to it. He hath threatened to make the ſinner feel the natural conſequence of obſtinacy, by ceaſing to ſtrive with him, and giving him up to the luſts of his own heart.

It is an awful, but an uſeful leſſon which young perſons may learn, from what they ſee in the world about them. Thoſe who have been long habituated to idleneſs, what a hopeleſs thing is it to attempt to bring them to apply? Thoſe who have been long habituated to drunkenneſs and intempe-

rance, or ſenſuality of any kind, we ought not to ſay they are inclined to it, but they are compelled to it by the irreſiſtible calls of theſe appetites, which they are no longer able to control. All who obſerve them are ſo ſenſible of it, that they conſider it as in vain to ſpeak to them, and think they may juſt as well ſpeak to the wind or the ſtorm: nay, we may often perceive the poor unhappy wretches themſelves ſenſible, in ſome meaſure, of their captivity, though unable to break the chains that bind them. Some drunkards have been known to be filled with the deepeſt vexation, and ready to tear their own fleſh, on reflection of their beaſtly condition, and yet drawn, by an irreſiſtible force, to the next temptation. Nothing can ſet in a clearer light the deceitfulneſs of ſin, than comparing the ſtrength of habits with the ſlow and ſilent manner in which they ſteal on. One ſingle act of ſin ſeems nothing; but one after another imperceptibly ſtrengthens the diſpoſition, and enſlaves the unhappy criminal beyond hope of recovery.

(5.) The next ſtage in a ſinner's courſe, is, to loſe the ſenſe of ſhame, and ſin openly and boldly. Sin is, in itſelf, a diſhonourable thing, which hath in many inſtances, the teſtimony of mankind againſt it, though their practice be on its ſide. Hence comes the veil and covering of hypocriſy. Moſt part of ſins are the works of darkneſs, becauſe they ſhun the light. But, when once a ſinner has come to a certain degree, he throws off every maſk or covering, and ſins in the face of the ſun. He no more ſeeks darkneſs for his evil deeds, but walks as "deſtruction that waſteth at noon-day." The obſerving

eyes, and cenſuring tongues of men, are now no bar in his way; ſince the ſtrength of inclination and habit is ſuch that he muſt indulge himſelf, he takes courage, and refuſes to be reſtrained.

The prophet Jeremiah mentions it as an evidence of a high degree of degeneracy in the children of Iſrael, that many of them had loſt all ſenſe of ſhame, Jer. vi. 15. "Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? nay, thy were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh: therefore they ſhall fall among them that fall: at the time that I viſit them they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the Lord." And, without all queſtion, it is an evidence of an uncommon height of impiety, when even natural ſhame is gone; and whoever are in that condition, have loſt a very powerful fence to virtue. So long as ſhame remains, it is a great draw-back upon them in their licentious practices; but, when it is no more, they are without curb or reſtraint, they *draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and ſin as it were with a cart-rope.* And that men are naturally carried to this bold and ſhameleſs impiety, is evident from the very nature of the thing. Repeated acts of ſin, which muſt be known, offend natural modeſty ſo frequently, and accuſtom a man ſo much to ſhame, that he loſes the ſenſe of it in time altogether. Of this we have but too many examples.

(6.) Another ſtage in the ſinner's progreſs, is, to harden himſelf ſo far, as to ſin without remorſe of conſcience. The conſcience of a ſinner, for a long time, bears its teſtimony againſt him, and every outward indulgence coſts him ſome inward uneaſineſs; but, after he hath given himſelf over to abandoned

wickedneſs, it frequently ceaſes its reproof. This victory he may obtain two different ways: 1. The eaſieſt and ſpeedieſt way is by hearkening to looſe principles. Theſe, at ouce, ſet the mind at eaſe, and blunt the reproofs of conſcience. But of this I have ſpoken on a former head. 2. The other way is practical. The frequent repetition of atrocious crimes ſtupifies the conſcience. They, as it were, weary it out, and drive it to deſpair. It is much the ſame with the monitor in our own breaſt, and any friend who has a concern for another; if he finds that inſtruction, admonition, reproach, are all in vain, he, at laſt, looſes the reins, and ſuffers him to take his courſe. Now, what muſt be the condition of a man who has out-ſinned even his conſcience itſelf? he muſt ſurely be kept within no bounds, but triumph in his miſerable conqueſt. The apoſtle Paul tells us, 1 Tim. iv. 2. of ſome who are guilty of "ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy, having their conſcience ſeared with a hot iron." And thus deſcribes the condition of ſome ſinners, Eph. iv. 19. "Who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over unto laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs." Perhaps it may be thought ſome degree of comfort to a ſinner to have overcome his conſcience, ſo that he is no more harraſſed with its reproofs. But conſider, I pray you, that all that he hereby gains, is only to be a little farther out of the way of recovery, a little nearer to deſtruction. What avails it, that he has rendered himſelf inſenſible of his danger? This will neither ſcreen him from it, nor make it lighter when it falls. There is ſomething, on the contrary, extremely terrible in the condition of that man who is inſenſible

of the judgment awaiting him, and ſtill going on till he lift up his eyes in torments that ſhall never have an end. But, before this, he has frequently ſome further ſteps to go. Having finiſhed his character, he proceeds to finiſh his work; and therefore, in the

(7.) Place, Improved ſinners often come to boaſt and glory of their wickedneſs. It is ſomething to be above ſhame; but it is more ſtill to glory in wickedneſs, and eſteem it honourable. Hear what the apoſtle Paul ſays of ſuch, Phil. iii. 18, 19. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe god is their belly, and whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things." How many are there who have ſtudied to excel each other in the glorious arts of debauchery and riot, and then proclaim their own praiſes upon the ſubject! How dreadful and how pernicious a character! for it is never ſeparated from its counterpart, deſpiſing and reproaching true religion and a ſtedfaſt adherence to its laws. It gives me great concern to ſay, that there is ſo much pains taken amongſt us, to give countenance to profanity; ſo that it requires no ſmall meaſure of courage and reſolution not to be aſhamed of our Maſter's croſs. To what height of wickedneſs are thoſe arrived, who have thus inverted the natural order of things, have maſtered their own judgment, and turned their reaſon upſide down. Glorious ambition indeed! to have made ſuch a progreſs downward toward the brute creation, both as to their bodily appetites and the ſentiments of their minds. There remaineth but one ſtep more for them to take, viz.

(2.) Not to be content with being wicked themſelves, but to uſe all their art and influence to make others ſo too. This is to be zealous in ſinning, and induſtriouſly to promote the intereſt of the infernal cauſe. How often do we find thoſe who have no fear of God before their own eyes, uſe their utmoſt endeavours to extinguiſh it in others, to laugh down the qualms of their conſciences, and break any reluctance they may ſeem to have at running to the ſame exceſs of riot with themſelves! Some are ſo eminent this way that they reſemble the Phariſees who "compaſſed ſea and land to make one proſelyte," and when they had made him, they made him "twofold more the child of hell than themſelves." So will zealots in vice compaſs ſea and land to make a proſelyte to the devil. It is hard to tell to what we ſhould attribute this extraordinary conduct. Is it that they are really perſuaded they have made a wiſe choice, and out of their great generoſity and affection to their brethren are willing to make them partners of their joy? This I am afraid will hardly be believed by any reaſonable man. It is more probable, that as they reſemble in many other reſpects their father the devil, ſo they reſemble him alſo in malice, "going about like roaring lions, ſeeking whom they may devour." They already begin to feel their miſery by ſin, and deſire to bring as many as poſſible into the ſame condition, as a wretched (and indeed miſtaken) ſource of conſolation in their future wo.

And now to cloſe the ſcene, thoſe who have thus far hardened themſelves ſhall be given up of God to judicial blindneſs of mind, and hardneſs of

heart. When this ſentence takes place, they are incapable of mercy, and marked out as veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction. That God ſometimes, in his righteous judgment, lays the ſinner under this awful ſentence, is evident from the following paſſages of ſcripture, Iſa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes: leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." John xii. 39, 40. "Therefore they could not believe, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they ſhould not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them." Rom. i. 28. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient." 2 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12. "And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs." This is always a conſequence of their former obſtinacy. As they deſpiſe and trample upon his mercy, he gives them over to themſelves and the maſters they have choſen; he finiſhes the day of his patience and long ſuffering, and devotes them to the judgment they deſerve.

And now, my brethren, view (and view it with terror!) the dreadful conſequence of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and by what fatal ſteps it leads on to that hardneſs of heart which is a ſure prelude of eternal miſery. Who that ventures upon the prac-

tice of ſin, ever intends to go ſo far? They mean only to take a ſhort trial of the pleaſures of vice; but it gains upon them inſenſibly, and fixes its hold ſtill faſter and faſter, till they are its abſolute ſlaves. I ſhall conclude this illuſtration of the deceitfulneſs of ſin with obſerving, that there is an exact correſpondence between the progreſs of a ſaint in holineſs and meetneſs for heaven, and the progreſs of a wicked man in ſin, and his growing fitneſs and preparation for hell. A new convert finds it hard at firſt to ſeparate himſelf from his ſins, and confine himſelf within the bounds of duty: he has ſome relenting thought towards his luſts, as old companions from which he is to part for ever. Juſt ſo a young and unexperienced ſinner finds ſome reluctance at ſin, ſome uneaſineſs from the challenges of conſcience, and painful forebodings of his unknown future fate.—A good man after walking ſome time in the paths of virtue finds the way become ſmoother and eaſier, and ſerves God with greater conſtancy, and with greater pleaſure. Juſt ſo the ſinner finds it more eaſy through time, to violate his conſcience, does it more frequently, and with leſs remorſe.—A good man ſoon aſſociates himſelf with the excellent ones of the earth, he is inſtructed by their converſation, emboldened by their example, and aſſiſted by their prayers. Juſt ſo the ſinner ſoon finds, or is found out by thoſe who are like him in inclination; they join in confederacy, adopt each others principles, and follow each others practice.—A good man in time is thoroughly confirmed, becomes poſſeſſed of a prevailing love to God and holineſs; ſo that it is his very na-

ture, his delight as well as duty. Juſt ſo the ſinner, in proceſs of time, is governed by his luſts; they acquire that authority over him that they do not ſolicit but demand indulgence.—A good man is fortified in his choice, and deſpiſes the ſmiles and frowns of a corrupt world. Juſt ſo the ſinner lays aſide ſhame, and ſays, nay but I will do that which hath proceeded out of my mouth.—A good man is filled with concern for the intereſt of religion. Juſt ſo the ſinner eſpouſes the cauſe of profanity, will plead it in his converſation, and ſtrengthen it with his ſubſtance.—In fine a good man is at laſt raiſed above the world, his heart is in heaven, and he longs to be carried there. Juſt ſo the ſinner fills up the meaſure of his iniquity; the infernal paſſions take poſſeſſion of the whole man, he wearies of the earth for the few good men that are in it, and is fully prepared for the language of blaſphemy and deſpair.

II. I proceed now to the ſecond general head, which was to conſider the duty which is founded by the apoſtle on the deceitfulneſs of ſin, viz. Mutual exhortation, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day:* This I ſhall do by ſome reflections on the three following particulars, 1ſt, The perſons who are obliged to exhort others. 2dly, The ſeaſon in which this duty is to be performed. And, 3dly, The manner in which it is to be performed, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs.

1ſt. As to the perſons who are obliged to exhort others. It ſeems in this paſſage to be laid upon Chriſtians in general, without any exception, *Exhort one*

another; and there is little doubt that it may and ought to be underſtood in the greateſt latitude. This is perfectly conſonant to the ſpirit of true religion, to our relation one to another, and to the conſtant language both of the Old and New Teſtament. The two great branches of practical religion, the heads of the two tables of the moral law, are love to God and love to man; and as our love to man ought to take its riſe from our love to God, ſo there can be no expreſſion of it more natural, or more neceſſary, than an endeavour to warn them of the deceitful nature and dangerous conſequences of ſin. This is a duty which is founded with the higheſt propriety on the deceitfulneſs of ſin. For as it deludes the ſinner himſelf often in an inſenſible manner, others may be ſuppoſed to obſerve his condition, and to ſee the impoſition more clearly, and are therefore obliged, by the dictates both of humanity and piety, to awaken him as it were from his lethargy, and admoniſh him of his danger. Oh, my brethren! conſider how clear and unqueſtionable this duty appears in common matters. Suppoſe any man were to obſerve an apartment on fire, and know of ſeveral perſons ſleeping over it, or near it, in ſecurity, when a few moments delay would wrap them in the flames, what a monſter of injuſtice and barbarity would he be reckoned, if he did not give them immediate notice, that they might flee from the danger. Is the danger of ſin leſs real? Is it leſs terrible? Juſt the contrary. The loſs of ſubſtance, or the loſs of life by fire in our dwellings, is not once to be compared with having ſoul and body for ever tormented in the fire of hell.

Agreeably to this, we find frequent mention of this duty both in the Old and New Teſtament. It is a precept in the Levitical law, Lev. xix 17. "Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him. Prov. ix. 8. "Rebuke a wiſe man, and he will love thee." Phil. ii. 4. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others." Heb. x. 24. "And let us conſider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works."

There is no doubt, at the ſame time, that this duty, however general, lies with peculiar and heavier obligations on ſome than on others, and varies a little according to the different relations we ſtand in to one another. You will eaſily be ſenſible how much it is the duty of thoſe who have the miniſtry of reconciliation committed to them, who are entruſted with the charge of precious ſouls, to be urgent and earneſt in their exhortations to all without exception; to be at all proper pains to fit themſelves for awakening the attention, enlightening the underſtanding, and convincing the conſciences of their hearers. It is their duty to do what in them lies, to trace the ſubtile workings and windings of the human heart, and to know the depths of Satan, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, to declare the whole counſel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable for their hearers. It is not to be denied that you ought to hear them with patience and attention; that they have a right to ſpeak with freedom and boldneſs to perſons of every rank and character; and that there ought to be a particular fire and edge

in their exhortations, since they watch for your souls as those who must give an account unto God.

There is also a particular obligation upon superiors of all sorts, whether in office, as magistrates; in station, as persons of wealth and opulence; in years, as those whom time and experience should have enriched with solid wisdom; in relation, as parents and masters of families, to be frequent in exhorting others, and warning them of the deceitfulness of sin. It is laid upon them, and expected of them, that they should not live to themselves, that they should not satisfy themselves with exacting and looking for the respect and deference which is their due; but that they ought to exert themselves in giving useful instruction or salutary admonition to all who are within their sphere. Is sin so deceitful? Are the unwary and ignorant so easily misled, and so hardly recovered? Then surely those who ought to excel others in knowledge, should be careful to impart it for the benefit of the weak. Undoubtedly, my brethren, it is not only a Christian, but a noble and amiable character, for those who are exalted above others, to be full of compassion to their inferiors, and in their whole conversation breathing a desire after their spiritual good.

But it is also plainly a part of Christian friendship, even for equals to exhort one another, and kindly to communicate their mutual experience in the spiritual life. "The lips of the righteous (we are told by Solomon) feed many." O how rare and difficult a duty! But wherefore should it be either difficult or rare? The love of God leads to it. The state of your brethren requires it. And surely it is neither

unpleaſant nor hurtful to him that performs it. I am ſenſible where the difficulty lies. We ſuppoſe there are few who will hear it with patience, or receive it with profit. Alas! my brethren, it is too true, we hear on all hands complaints that people will not take advice; that they are but offended, inſtead of being reformed. Perhaps, indeed, this is as much owing to the manner of giving, as to the backwardneſs of receiving counſel. However, we ſhall allow the objection; and ſince the duty is mutual, I hope it will not be reckoned wandering from the ſubject, if I beſeech you to ſubmit to one another's exhortation. We all ſtand in need of it; we may all be the better for it. What though it be adminiſtered imprudently or harſhly for the manner; nay, though it may flow from envy, pride or malice, as the principle you will loſe nothing by hearkening to the counſel. I do not remember any thing recorded more truly glorious for a monarch, than what we are told of Philip of Macedon, that he heard reproofs not only with patience, but with pleaſure: and I am ſure there is nothing more like a Chriſtian, than to profit, not only by the admonitions of friends, but by the reproaches of enemies. If they are juſt, reform what is amiſs; if they are probable, abſtain from the appearance of evil: if they are neither the one nor the other, ſubmit to them with patience, as a part of the will of God.

2. I come now to conſider the ſeaſon in which the duty of mutual exhortation is to be performed, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day.* By which we are to underſtand, that it is to be done frequently, and without delay. This, my brethren,

will perfectly accommodate the subject of this discourse to our present situation, when entering on another year. We have many admonitions of the quick passage of time; and all these serve to enforce the exhortation of the wise man, Eccl. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." If any hearer has received a conviction of the deceitfulness of sin, or the duty of mutual exhortation, he ought seriously to consider, that the present time only is his; that he knoweth not what a day or a night may bring forth; and that delaying or postponing what he may do at present, is at the possible or probable hazard of its being left undone for ever. I beseech you, my brethren, to make this use of the commencement of another year. There is no difference, in one sense, between one day and another, as much of life is spent, and as much of our dying frame is wasted in one day as in another; but our computation and reckoning of revolving years, by the principal seasons, only helps us to mark the constant, though silent passage of time, which, like a flowing river, is bearing us all down into the ocean of eternity. Has any of us then a relation, friend, or child, to whose eternal interest he desires, or sees it to be his duty to contribute? let him be speedy and diligent, whether by instruction, admonition, example, or even prayer: you know not how short a time the opportunity may last. By and by all these relations shall be dissolved. How many who were with us last year are now sleeping in the dust; their state irrevocably fixed for eternity, either entered into

reſt, and happy in their Redeemer's preſence, or reſerved in chains of darkneſs, and looking forward, with deſpair and terror, to the general judgment. No warning of the deceitfulneſs of ſin there; they know it, and feel it in inward reproach, and everlaſting ſelf-condemnation. No preaching of the goſpel there; no hope of recovery, or place for repentance there: ſo that we may juſtly addreſs every hearer of the goſpel, in the words of the apoſtle Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then, as workers together with him, beſeech you alſo, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he ſaith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of ſalvation have I ſuccoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of ſalvation."

I ſhall only add, that the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and the precarioufneſs of time, are conſiderations which ſerve greatly to ſtrengthen one another. As time waſtes, the ſinner hardens; not only is the ſeaſon paſſing away, but the work is becoming ſtill more difficult, and, at laſt, as I have ſhewn before, in the courſe of nature, and by the appointment of God, totally impoſſible. It is the danger of a hardened ſtate, that the Apoſtle urges, particularly in this paſſage, as the argument to diligence, *But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* And, indeed, elſewhere we are cautioned againſt delay for the ſame reaſon. Thus, in Pſal. xcv. 7, 8. which is cited a few verſes after the text, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderneſs."

3. Let us conſider the manner in which this exhortation muſt be given, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs. And, here, I muſt acknowledge, there is ſo great a variety of caſes, that it would be extremely difficult, or almoſt impoſſible, diſtinctly, to enumerate them all, and give the different directions that are ſuitd to each; there muſt be a great difference in the manner, according to the end propoſed. Superiors of all ſorts, magiſtrates, miniſters, and heads of families, may, and ought to reprove, both with authority and ſeverity, becauſe the end is not ſingly the reformation of an individual, but the preſervation of others, and the general good: nay, even private Chriſtians may often be called to reprove, in much the ſame manner, as a public teſtimony of their abhorrence of ſin; they may have it chiefly in view, to ſave or edify the by-ſtanders, by refuting the calumnies of an enemy, bearing down triumphant wickedneſs, or diſgracing an open factor for the devil.

But as I reckon the paſſage of ſcripture, which is the ſubject of my diſcourſe, has an eye chiefly to brotherly admonition, for the benefit of the perſon concerned, I ſhall juſt mention ſome of the moſt important directions for doing it with ſucceſs. Theſe ſhall be both negative and poſitive.

1*ſt*, You ought not to reprove at an uncertainty, upon bare rumour and ſuſpicion. This is what many people have done, and thereby have, in a great meaſure, loſt all the pains they have beſtowed. Where men are reproved in the wrong place, or for what they either are not guilty of, or are much leſs guilty than is ſuppoſed, it often puts them upon ſelf-

juſtification, and hardens them againſt all reproof for the time to come.

2*dly*, It ought not to be done when the offending perſon is in an ill temper to receive it. Though no time ought to be loſt in doing what good we can to our neighbour, eſpecially to the precious ſoul; yet it is worſe than loſing time to attempt it, when he is in a diſpoſition to reject it: for example, it is uſually improper preſently after the ſin is committed, becauſe then the heat is not over, nor the uproar of the paſſions and affections appeaſed. Many a domeſtic reproof is thrown away in this manner. Perhaps, a huſband comes home diſordered in liquor, and his wife meets him with a ſurly countenance, and reproachful language; the offence is too recently taken by her to ſpeak with meekneſs, and the provocation too recently given by him to hear with patience: hence diſſenſions and quarrels ariſe; and, perhaps, he is hardened in his ſin, by thinking he hath greater cauſe to be diſpleaſed with his wife for the frowardneſs of her temper, than ſhe has to be diſpleaſed with him for his intemperance. On the other hand, it is not improbable, that, by waiting till the return of calmneſs and reflection, the ſin may be ſet in ſuch a light, as to carry conviction to the conſcience, and, by the bleſſing of God, prove the means of reformation. Many are the admirable remarks of Solomon on this and the like ſubjects; particularly, Prov. xv. 23. "A word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it!"

3*dly*, We are not to reprove thoſe whom we have reaſon to believe to be ſuch deſperate wretches, that they would be but the more exaſperated, and

ſin in the more daring manner, on account of the reproof. To theſe it would be no act of love and charity, as it would provoke them to diſhonour God ſtill more highly, and ſo heap ſtill heavier loads of wrath and vengeance on their own heads. It is a ſaying of Auguſtine, one of the fathers: "If we, therefore abſtain from admoniſhing wicked men, becauſe the ſeaſon does not ſuffer it, or, we fear, they may become worſe by it, that ſeems to be the counſel of charity." And, alas! how many are there, who, when they are reproved for their ſins, though very juſtly, are preſently kindled into a rage, fall a blaſpheming and railing at piety, and all that profeſs it, and ſeem more confirmed than ever in their hatred and oppoſition to it. Therefore we are expreſsly warned of the danger of this by Solomon, Prov. ix. 7. "He that reproveth a ſcorner, getteth to himſelf ſhame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himſelf a blot." And, to the ſame purpoſe, our bleſſed Saviour, Matth. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." On the other hand, poſitively, when reproof or exhortation are adminiſtered,

1ſt, It ſhould be made appear, as much as poſſible, to flow from love and affection as its principle. It is plain that this ought to be its principle, in order to its being a duty acceptable to God; and there will be little hope of its ſucceſs with men, unleſs this appear to their conviction. It would, indeed, be greater perfection to profit by the malicious invectives of enemies; but every body will allow, that

is not ordinarily to be expected; for this reason, all oſtentation and vain glory is carefully to be avoided, and every thing that may look like only affecting ſuperiority; for the ſame reaſon, it ſhould, in all ordinary caſes, be done in as ſecret a manner as circumſtances will permit it. The caſe of public offences, to be ſure, muſt be excepted; concerning which we are told, "Them that ſin, rebuke before all, that others alſo may fear." But, in other caſes, not only of private injury, but of private ſins, the rule of our Saviour is to be obſerved, Matth. xviii. 15. "If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother." I cannot ſay all that might be ſaid on this ſubject; but nothing can be of greater importance, than, if poſſible, to ſhew that it flows from love; for, where the offender is truly convinced of this, even though he ſhould not be reformed, it is very ſeldom that he is diſpleaſed. Therefore,

2*dly*, As it ought to flow from love as the principle, ſo it ought to be conducted with meekneſs in the manner; no railing or reviling expreſſions, which will look like the wounds of an enemy to deſtroy, and not the balm of a phyſician to cure. Therefore the Apoſtle gives us advice in the following terms, Gal. vi. 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs: conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted." This laſt expreſſion gives an inimitable beauty to the apoſtolic counſel. Our own ſins ſhould fill us with compaſſion as much as reſentment againſt ſinners, and ſhould make us take

the ſame gentle methods with others that we would wiſh to be taken with ourſelves, if we were in their condition. We are of the ſame nature, liable to the ſame temptations, and, if left of God, may eaſily fall into the ſame miſcarriages. Beſides, as it is moſt ſuitable to our ſtate and character, ſo it is moſt likely to have a proper effect. Meek and gentle admonitions will penetrate the heart, when rough and clamorous reproofs will be rejected and deſpiſed. Thus Solomon ſays, Prov. xxv. 15. "By long forbearing is a prince perſuaded, and a ſoft tongue breaketh the bone." And, Chap. xv. 1. "A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, but grievous words ſtir up anger."

3*dly*, Reproof ſhould be given with ſome degree of zeal as well as meekneſs; we ſhould avoid the extreme of remiſſneſs as well as ſeverity. A ſlight careleſs reproof is often worſe than none; for it is ready to make the offender think lightly of his own offence. There muſt, therefore, be ſuch evident weight and concern of ſpirit, as may ſerve to evidence as well his danger as your own love. For this reaſon, I beg leave to obſerve, that ſpeaking in a way of jeſt and merriment, on ſins of an atrocious nature is deeply criminal, and highly pernicious. Solomon tells us, "Fools make a mock at ſin." Tho' a turn to raillery and pleaſantneſs of temper is reckoned a very harmleſs, as well as agreeable diſpoſition; yet great care ought to be taken of the ſubjects on which it is exerciſed. It is only ſmaller weakneſſes that ought to be treated in this manner. Sins againſt God ſhould be treated with a gravity and ſerioufneſs from the importance of their nature

and effects. I ſhall give an inſtance of this. Swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, is ſometimes ridiculed, inſtead of being reproved. This ſeldom has a good effect. The crime is of ſo atrocious a nature, and ſo direct an aſſault upon the majeſty of God, that it ought not to be treated lightly, as only a ſmall indecorum, or breach of good manners. It ought, indeed, to be deſpiſed for its folly; but, at the ſame time, it ought to be deeply abhorred for its guilt.

4thly, In admoniſhing one another for particular ſins, we ſhould ſtill keep in view the ſource of all ſin, a polluted nature; and the great danger of the ſinner, as in a ſinful ſtate. Though particular miſcarriages may give the occaſion, it is of ſmall moment to convince them of the folly of ſuch or ſuch a practice, unleſs you point out to them the neceſſity of repentance, in general, upon evangelical principles. I have rarely ſeen that any arguments were ſufficient to reform a ſinner of any particular fault he was once addicted to, but thoſe drawn from eternity, and the awful effects of the diſpleaſure of a holy God. Preſent inconveniencies, however great, ſoon loſe their effect, and are quite unequal to combat a vitious inclination, or wreſtle with the power of habit. But, though it were otherwiſe, what a ſmall matter is it to cure a man of being a drunkard, or a ſwearer, or a whoremonger, if ſtill you leave him a ſlave to ſin, upon the whole, a ſervant of the devil, and an heir of hell? It is plainly with a view to the final conſequences of ſin, that the Apoſtle recommends mutual exhortation in this paſſage, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-*

day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Would you, therefore, admonish any person to his real profit? make use of particulars, to convince him of the evil of all sin, as such, and its power and influence over him by nature. When you reprove him for any fault he has committed, shew him the deceitfulness of sin, and where, if he do not speedily stop, he will be landed at last. Let his eternal state be the motive that urges you to the duty, and let the same great consideration be made use of to carry home the instruction with power and efficacy upon his heart.

5*thly*, In the last place. Let those who would acquit themselves of this duty in a proper manner, be particularly watchful and circumspect in their own conduct. It is evident, that nothing can be more unsuitable, than for those who take upon them to admonish others, to be grossly and visibly blameable themselves. It is, indeed, so intolerable, that nobody can bear their instructions with patience. You know, from daily experience, that recrimination is the first thing to which those who are reprehended betake themselves. The moment they are challenged, the reply is ready, Why, you yourself do so and so, or, perhaps, worse. So prone are they to this, that many times they will upbraid men with innocent or lawful things, as if they were faults, to cover their own guilty practice. Now, if this is the case, how much more hurtful must it be for those who reprove others, to be really liable to just accusation themselves, and, perhaps, upon the same subject? Therefore our Saviour says, with the greatest strength and propriety, Luke vi. 41, 42. "And

why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceiveſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either, how canſt thou ſay to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyſelf beholdeſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, caſt out firſt the beam out of thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye?" Perhaps, my brethren, ſome of you are ſaying within yourſelves: Alas! you have now deſtroyed the whole effect of what has been urged, at ſo great length, on the duty of mutual exhortation; for where is the man that is without ſin to reprove his neighbour? My brethren, no doubt we have all ſuch failings as ought to make us do it with meekneſs and ſelf-denial; yet, ſurely, we both may and ought to walk ſo circumſpectly, as not to be juſtly liable to heavy accuſations. Though there is no holding of intemperate tongues, yet, ſurely, there is ſuch a thing as a converſation becoming the goſpel, which will entitle the ſervant of Chriſt to appear with ſome meaſure of courage in his maſter's cauſe; nay, and ſuch an habitual love of mankind, as may ſometimes open their ears to his ſalutary counſel. And, believe it, thoſe who begin to make conſcience of their duty to their neighbour, either in a family, or a wider ſphere, will find its powerful and happy influence as a reſtraint upon their own conduct. They will be naturally led to double their diligence, leſt their example ſhould, unhappily, fruſtrate the effect of their reproofs.—One particular more I muſt add, that the next thing to being always in the right, is to be humble, and ready

to confeſs when you have been in the wrong. This alſo is a ſcripture precept, James v. 16. "Confeſs your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." I am perſuaded that few things would add greater weight to any perſon's admonitions, than his being willing to confeſs, and ready to amend any thing that was pointed out to him as blameable in his own conduct.

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical application of what has been ſaid. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee the great corruption and depravity of our nature. I look upon it as of great moment to have a deep and growing conviction of this truth. It is the language of ſcripture, it is the language of experience, and it is the parent of humility. I obſerved in the beginning of my diſcourſe on this ſubject, and it appears from every thing that has been ſaid upon it, that the deceitfulneſs of ſin is but another expreſſion for the treachery of the human heart. In vain would the objects of ſin appear before us; in vain would Satan and his emiſſaries preſent their ſolicitations, if our own inclination did not plead powerfully in their favour. To be deeply convinced of this, will lead to the exerciſe of penitence, and to ſelf-denial, which is the beſt mean of our ſupport and preſervation. If the deceitfulneſs of ſin lies chiefly in ourſelves, that man will guard againſt it in the moſt effectual manner, who has learned to fear himſelf as his own greateſt enemy.

2. From what has been ſaid, let us be led to ſtrictneſs and frequency in ſelf-examination If ſin is

of deceitful, it may eaſily lurk unobſerved. Self-knowledge is a ſtudy of as great difficulty as importance. You have heard what artful diſguiſes ſin puts on, and how dreadfully ſome have been led aſtray. The very beſt duties may be polluted by ſinful motives, and the very worſt things may be done by an erring conſcience, of which we may juſtly ſay, with our Saviour, Matth. vi. 23. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs!" The old heathen precept, "Know thyſelf," was reckoned ſo excellent a ſaying, that they ſuppoſed it to be a revelation from Heaven. And, in the holy ſcriptures, we have many exhortations to ſelf-examination. I ſhall only mention that of the apoſtle Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own ſelves: know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Nay, after all our pains to examine ourſelves, there ought to remain ſuch a ſuſpicion of our own treachery, as ſhould make us intreat, humbly and earneſtly, the more impartial trial of a heart ſearching God, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting."

3. From what hath been ſaid, let me beſeech all, but eſpecially young perſons, to beware of the beginnings of ſin. It may be ſaid of ſin in general, as Solomon ſays of ſtrife, "the beginning of it is like the letting out of water." Beware of all that diſ-

courſe which tends to give you ſlight thoughts of any ſin. Sometimes men conſider ſins as ſmall ſins, and therefore tolerable. Many parents have thought it wrong to check their children for the follies and levities of youth, and have found, to their melancholy experience, that when follies had been ſuffered to ripen into crimes, they had taken too deep hold to be rooted up. Many make light of ſin by compariſon. How common is the pretence of the drunkards: We are harming nobody; we are not ſpeaking ill of our neighbours; we are not oppreſſing the poor. In the mean time, they are ſoon led to curſing and blaſphemy; and, perhaps, by their riotous living, they are unable to pay their juſt debts, rob the induſtrious poor of their right, and, for the indulgence of a beaſtly appetite, bring their own offspring to beggary and ruin. Such is the behaviour of many of your harmleſs people; men of ſocial friendly diſpoſitions, that, if you believe them, would not wrong their neighbour of a farthing to their knowledge; and yet it would be happy for any man to fall into the hands of high-way robbers rather than into their ſociety. How ſhort-ſighted men are! they not only forget to look forward to the other world, but look not even to any diſtance in this. From time to time we are made fools by ſin, which never aſks more of us than the preſent compliance; yet if this is granted, never leaves us till our ſtate is irrecoverable. What reaſon have all to be afraid of that deplorable hardneſs of heart which is the conſequence of the continued indulgence of ſin. Let us never conſider any ſin by itſelf, but together with that ugly train which it draws behind it; and then, though our falſe hearts

might plead for the indulgence of a ſingle luſt, they may not be ſo willing to ſubmit to that deluge of vice which follows faſt at its heels.

4. In the laſt place, I ſhall cloſe the ſubject, by addreſſing an exhortation to thoſe of my hearers, who have been long and hardened ſinners; who have many habits of vice cleaving to them; who have hitherto deſpiſed the goſpel, and even ſat in the ſeat of the ſcornful. No doubt, you have heard, in vain, and perhaps with contempt, many exhortations of this kind before; and therefore there is, humanly ſpeaking, but little hope, that any thing I can ſay will have the effect. However, as our bleſſed and gracious Maſter has commanded his goſpel to be preached to every creature, this Prince of the kings of the earth is able, by his Spirit accompanying the word, to lay the proudeſt and the boldeſt of his enemies proſtrate at his feet; let me beſeech you, in his name, to hear, that your ſouls may live. Why will you longer continue at enmity with him, while he is offering you mercy? nay, he is treating you with mercy in every inſtance of his kind providence, in the renewed meſſages of his bleſſed word, and in his dying agonies on the accurſed tree? Have you been long wedded to ſin? he is able to ſet you free; he came to deſtroy the works of the devil, and is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and reſtore liberty to the moſt ſorrowful captive. "We then, as workers together with him, beſeech you alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Remember, on the other hand, I beſeech you, the dreadful vengeance that awaits the deſpiſers of the goſpel. If you ſtill refuſe the

gracious offer; if you will not ſuffer his mercy to be glorified in your recovery, his holineſs, power, and juſtice, ſhall be illuſtrated in your perdition. Time is haſtening away; judgment is haſtening on; no refuſing to appear at that bar; no deceiving or biaſſing that judge; no room to eſcape; no ſource of conſolation under that ſentence. How unſupportable the reflection on opportunity irrecoverably loſt! And how terrible the ſanction which follows upon the offer of mercy! You may read it, Prov. i. 24,—31. "Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall they call upon me but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel; they deſpiſed all my reproof: therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices."

I only add, if any impreſſion is made on your minds of the importance of eternity, ſuffer it to abide there. Let it have an immediate effect. Of all the deceits of ſin or Satan, none more fatal than that of putting off convictions to a more convenient ſeaſon. I conclude, therefore, with the words of Solomon, Eccleſ. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither thou goeſt." Amen.

SERMON V.

THE BELIEVER GOING TO GOD AS HIS EXCEEDING JOY.

PSALM xliii. 4.

Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

IT is of great moment to attend to the proper mixture of reverence and love which ought to poſſeſs our hearts in the worſhip of the living God. If they ariſe from proper principles, they will not deſtroy or weaken, but ſtrengthen one another. A believer can never lie too low in the duſt before the moſt holy God; he can never be too ſenſible either of his diſtance as a creature, or his guilt and unworthineſs as a ſinner: but, at the ſame time, he can never be too deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of divine love, or have too ſtrong and ardent deſires after communion and fellowſhip with God. The truth is, the lower we are in our own ſight, it doth but the more illuſtrate and magnify all the grace that is ſhewn to us in the goſpel: and the more joyfully we contemplate the fulneſs of our portion in an infinite God, it will but the more bring back this reflection, and conſtrain us to confeſs that we are leſs than the leaſt of all his mercies.

In ſeveral paſſages of the Pſalms of David, we have very warm and fervent expreſſions of the delight which the man after God's own heart had in the worſhip of his ſanctuary. There are few of theſe more beautiful and forcible than the paſſage of which my text is a part, "O ſend out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. *Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.*" That which ſeems to have brought the Pſalmiſt to this ſtriking and beautiful thought, was, his being under the preſſure of heavy affliction; and, particularly, in a ſtate of diſtance and baniſhment from the temple ſervice. This led him to flee for refuge to God, his almighty friend and unchangeable portion. Did the Pſalmiſt then go to God as his conſolation in diſtreſs? What reaſon is there for every Chriſtian to go to him as his Father and his God, not only for ſupport under the various trials of this mortal ſtate, but for happineſs and peace after he hath ſeen and felt the inherent vanity of every created enjoyment?

All I ſhall further add upon the words is, that what David is here praying for, is to be brought to the temple of God, to have acceſs to his courts, and communion with him there. This he plainly looks upon as a fource of exceeding joy; and ſurely to thoſe who are duly diſpoſed for it, there is not, there cannot be, in this world, a more delightful employment than the joint celebration of our Creator and Redeemer's praiſe; than the united voice of his ſervants in his temple. It is the neareſt approach we can make to the employment of heaven, and the moſt

ſenſible foretaſte we can have of its happineſs in this foreign land.

But, my brethren, I muſt limit the ſubject to what is the particular and diſtinguiſhing employment of this day,—the holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, commemorating our Redeemer's dying love. This was called by the ancients the *Euchariſt*, or *Sacrifice of Praiſe*. And, indeed, no diſpoſition is more proper or neceſſary, in attending upon it, than a joyful and thankful frame of ſpirit. This will be like a precious perfume, which will fill the houſe with its fragrance, and will greatly ſtrengthen every other gracious diſpoſition; and therefore, my intention is, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or, for what reaſons we ought, in this ſolemn ſervice in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.*

Having done ſo, I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

I. In the firſt place, then, I am to ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or for what reaſons we ought, in this ſolemn ſervice, in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.* I am deeply ſenſible, my brethren, that I have entered on a taſk to which I am very unequal, to raiſe your

minds to that ſublime temper of joy in God, and to diſcloſe that fountain of joy there is to every believer, in what his Redeemer has done and is ſtill doing for him. It is ſo great a ſubject, that we ourſelves may ſee how unfit a mortal tongue is to ſpeak of it: and therefore, I ſhall in the entry, pray "that God may ſhed abroad his love in our hearts; that he may ſend forth his light and his truth, that they may be guides to us;" and accompany the word ſpoken with the powerful energy of the Spirit of conſolation. But a little of that real communion with God which is the work of his Spirit, and which he ſometimes vouchſafes to his people, will give them ſuch a lively ſenſe of his love and joy in him, as they themſelves know may be felt, but cannot be expreſſed: and I cannot forbear already obſerving to you, that the meaneſt real Chriſtian ſhall, one day in the higher houſe, have ſuch a fulneſs of joy, and ſuch conceptions of God and his Redeemer's love, that he ſhall look down, with wonder, at the weak and imperfect ſtretches of our imagination after it now. But ſo long as we are here, let us patiently content ourſelves with what is given us as neceſſary to ſupport our weary ſteps in this deſolate wilderneſs; with what this ordinance, inſtituted for enlivening our faith ſupplies us for our comfort and joy.

For this purpoſe, let me beg your attention to the following conſiderations.

1. You ought to go to God, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, becauſe in it you have the fulleſt aſſurance, and the cleareſt evidence of the forgiveneſs of your ſins, and peace with your offended Maker. This is the preliminary mercy which, with

reſpect to fallen creatures, muſt open the way to every other bleſſing. Nothing ſo much damps our joy in God, and leſſens our ſatisfaction in addreſſing him, as conſciouſneſs of guilt. This it is that makes religion ſo unpleaſant to the carnal worldling; even the ſecure ſinner, who ſeems to walk without fear, is yet deterred by natural conſcience from drawing near to God. He does all in his power to rid his mind of the thoughts of God's ordinary and conſtant preſence with him in every place. A horror of his Maker poſſeſſes his mind at all times; he cannot love him as a gracious Father, becauſe he hates him as an enemy, and fears him as a righteous judge. Nay, the ſame thing it is that makes us all feel ſo frequently an averſion at the duties of religion. The cold hand of a ſpirit of bondage freezes up the affections. Trembling and fear taketh hold upon us. An inward dread and jealouſy of our own ſtate throws a gloom and darkneſs, as it were, through the temple of God. And, with whatever ſtrength or beauty the promiſes or privileges of the ſaints may be ſet forth, there is a ſecret reſtraint upon us, and as a voice diſcharging us from touching them, as forbidden fruit. Were we but as pure, and free from guilt, we ſhould, with as much joy and ſatisfaction, draw nigh to God, as the angels do in heaven.

I have been the more full in opening this to you, that you may ſee the foundation there is in nature, and in fact, for the leading doctrine of the goſpel, "Chriſt Jeſus ſet forth as a propitiation for ſins, through faith in his blood."

His bleſſed body was broken, and his precious

blood was ſhed, for the remiſſion of ſins. Are you to commemorate this? are you to receive the viſible ſigns and the appointed ſeals of it? does not this aſſure you, that your ſins are forgiven for Chriſt's ſake? Are your ſins very great? are they many in number, and heinous in their aggravations? Conſider the infinite value of this ſacred blood. It was no leſs than that of the eternal Son of God, who cheerfully undertook our cauſe: "and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Iſa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; and with his ſtripes we are healed." O unſearchable myſtery! O the infinite holineſs of God! O the tremendous juſtice of God! How well may the exhortation be preſſed, Iſa. i. 18. "Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool." Well may we ſay with the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief." Are you afraid of the condemning ſentence of the law, Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us." Are you aſhamed to appear before God in your own undeſerving character, hear, and comply with your Saviour's own counſel, Rev. iii. 18. "I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint

thine eyes with eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee." In the ſpotleſs robes of your Redeemer's righteouſneſs, you ſhall be adorned for the courts of your God, and dwell in his preſence. Are you afraid to apply all this to yourſelves? This is the expreſs purpoſe of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to confirm and cloſe the covenant of peace with every partaker. Do you doubt the ſincerity of the offer upon God's part? See him diſpenſing the healing medicine, "This is my body which was broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Hear him ſaying, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt." Hear him further ſaying, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out." Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the Spirit and the bride ſay, Come; and let him that heareth ſay, Come; and let him that is athirſt, come. And whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely." All who have truly groaned under a ſenſe of guilt may here ſee their pardon ſealed, and may and ought to rejoice in it as theirs; and, unleſs they doubt the faithfulneſs of God's word, or the efficacy of their Saviour's merit, may triumph in both, and ſet at defiance the thunders of the law, the reproaches of conſcience, and the accuſations of the devil. They may ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, Rom. viii. 33, 34. "Who

ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us."

2. You ought to go to God, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, as it affords the ſtrongeſt and moſt illuſtrious proof of divine love. This, my brethren, is the immediate ſubject of our contemplation in the Lord's ſupper; and I chuſe to conſider it as an argument by itſelf, ſeparately from its fruits, becauſe nothing ſerves more to heighten our affection to, and delight in God, than a firm perſuaſion of his love to us. Is it a comfortable thing to have the pardon of our ſins? It is alſo unſpeakably refreſhing, and even raviſhing, to view, in faith, the wonderful means by which it is accompliſhed. We may conſider, ſhortly here, the riches of redeeming grace, as extending to the ſinners of Adam's race in general; and, then, what it is for every believer to conſider himſelf as the determinate object of divine regard in the councils of peace. The whole perfections of an infinite God ſhine with united luſtre in the work of redemption. His power, wiſdom, holineſs, and juſtice, are ſeverally and jointly illuſtrated in it. His unſearchable wiſdom is mentioned, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!" His mighty power, Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." The righteouſneſs of his government,

Rom. iii. 26. "To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But love is most conspicuous of all; and is therefore most frequently insisted on: John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Rom. v. 8. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." And, indeed, my brethren, it passeth the power of man to open fully the greatness of the love of God to sinners in Christ Jesus. It is a subject which we are so far from being able now to exhaust, that it shall afford matter for adoring inquiry to all eternity, whilst the everlasting God lives and reigns with his saints, and unfolds to them, age after age, more ample views of his goodness and greatness. By what shall we measure the love of a friend, but by the greatness of his gifts? What sentiment then shall we entertain of the love of God for his (justly styled) unspeakable gift? He has given us his only begotten Son, "who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" the best and greatest of created beings, nay, the whole creation itself had been nothing compared to it.

The truth is, I am ready to think that there

ſeems to be ſomething like divine contrivance, and infinite deſign, in this particular circumſtance. All created things are in themſelves equal, and alike eaſy to the power of God, being but the effects of his ſimple will. For this reaſon there could be no comparative greatneſs in any ſuch gifts. There was therefore but this one way left to expreſs an uncommon degree of love, that he who was one and equal with the Father, ſhould himſelf be employed in the meſſage, and "bear our ſins in his own body on the tree." Nothing elſe could have made man an expenſive purchaſe. Nothing elſe that God could beſtow, would have had any appearance of doing violence to himſelf; or could give meaning and beauty to that expreſſion, Rom. viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?" The Lord of the vineyard, in the parable, is repreſented as in ſuſpenſe, how to fall upon a method to break the ſtubbornneſs of the huſbandmen. Luke xx. 13. "Then ſaid the Lord of the vineyard, What ſhall I do? I will ſend my beloved Son, it may be they will reverence him when they ſee him." Let us paraphraſe and apply it. God, who bears the perſon of the maſter of the vineyard, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, What ſhall reclaim theſe obſtinate children of mercy, become rebels? Nothing but the invincible force of ſuperior love. But wherein ſhall the love of the eternal God appear to advantage? in nothing but an eternal gift: they ſhall not be cheeply purchaſed, they ſhall be bought with blood, with that ſacred blood, which ſhall be the ſurpriſe of angels, and the wonder of heaven. Theſe reflections

I would make with reverence, on this elevated and delightful, but awful and tremendous theme. One thing appears clearly from them, that it is not only obſcuring the luſtre, not only weakening the force, but deſtroying the very being of redeeming love, to deny the proper and eternal Godhead of Chriſt, the Mediator. But, Oh! my brethren, what an improvement is it, to the contemplation of the love of God, for each of us to conſider himſelf as having been from eternity the object of it. While I taſte the ſtreams of his bounty, may I thus trace it back to its ſource! Did he love me from the foundation of the world! Did he pity me, when in unprovoked rebellion againſt him! Did he make ſo gracious proviſion for my recovery and ſalvation! Did he make atonement for my guilt, by the blood of his own Son! and conquer my heart by the power of his ſovereign grace! What returns of praiſe and gratitude are his due! With what joy ought I to remember my Redeemer's death at his table, in the hope of ſharing with him his crown and his throne, in a higher ſtate!

3. You ought to *go to God*, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy;* as you have in it the cleareſt and fulleſt aſſurance of receiving from him all that is neceſſary for your comfort and happineſs, while you continue here. There are, in a ſtrict ſenſe, but two ends of going to God in his worſhip and ordinances, to expreſs our ſenſe of, and thankfulneſs for favours received, and as beggars for more. Now, my brethren, in this ordinance you are not only called to celebrate the love of a gracious and reconciled God, but to truſt in the fulneſs of an all-ſufficient God,

That we may view this the more distinctly, there are these two kinds of blessings we stand in need of, those that relate to our spiritual life, and those that relate to our temporal comfort.

1st, Those that relate to the spiritual life. What is the great desire of every real servant of God in this house? Is it not to have your hearts more inflamed with the love of God, and more devoted to his fear? Is not sin your greatest burthen, and its remaining influence your greatest grief? Now, where can you have a more reasonable hope of getting your gracious dispositions strengthened, or your sins mortified, than at a communion table. Is it not expressly designed for your spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace? And as the institution of these sensible signs is a remarkable proof of divine condescension, so I can hardly conceive any thing more wisely and happily calculated for this excellent end. What can more strengthen your faith in a dying Saviour, than being allowed to look upon the signs of his broken body, and his blood poured out? What can speak greater peace to the conscience, than your being allowed and invited to receive him explicitly? "This is my body broken for you." What can more happily serve to kindle and inflame your love to God, than the immediate contemplation of his infinite love for you? Where can you take such a hateful view of sin, as a detested object, as at the Lord's table, where you see it in your Saviour's sufferings? Where and how can you lay such a bond upon the conscience, as by receiving the seals of this sacred engagement? How can you give such a deadly wound to your strongest lusts, as by nailing and affixing

them to your Redeemer's croſs? What motive of future obedience equal to bearing about in your bodies the dying of the Lord Jeſus? See what the Apoſtle ſays, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead." Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me." What remedy can you find for your own weakneſs, like the all-ſufficiency of Chriſt? Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily." 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption." I will not ſo widely handle the ſubject as to cite to you all the paſſages which ſhew that the ſpirit of ſanctification is a part of the purchaſe of your Redeemer, and one of his gifts to thoſe who humbly implore it. Is it not well known, and do not believers at his table, ſenſibe of their own weakneſs, and confident of their Saviour's power, get their feet upon the necks of their enemies, and ſay, "I can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening me."

2*d*, They have here all things neceſſary for their temporal comfort. They have a complete remedy for their cares, as well as their ſins. As at the Lord's table you lay hold of the covenant of peace, ſo there, if any where, you may ſee, that it is ordered in all things and ſure; your food and raiment and all neceſſary proviſion, is contained in it; and Chriſt's body is the pledge. How gracious the pro-

miſe! your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of theſe things, Pſal. xxxiv. 8, 9, 10. "O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good: Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his ſaints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord ſhall not want any good thing." Iſa. xxxii 16. "He ſhall dwell on high; his place of defence ſhall be the munitions of rocks; bread ſhall be given him, his waters ſhall be ſure." Deliverance from ſuffering is contained in it, Pſal. xxxiv. 19. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Strength and grace to ſuffer with patience is contained in it, Iſa. xliii. 2. "When thou paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee." The ſanctified uſe and improvement of ſuffering is contained in it. Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe." 2 Cor. iv. 16. "For which cauſe we faint not; but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Conſider eſpecially, that at the Lord's table you have an immediate view of the great foundation of reliance on divine providence, Rom. viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things." That God, who was ſo laviſh of his love, as not to ſpare even his own Son, but gave him

up to be despised, buffeted, and crucified for you, will not be so inconsistently hard, as to refuse the small gift in comparison of a little earthly good. He whose soul was redeemed by the blood of Christ shall not lose his body for a little bread.

I cannot help observing here, of what universal use and benefit the doctrine of Christ crucified is, and how high a place it ought to hold in our esteem. It is not only useful for assuring us of the pardon of sin, but makes us superior to all those sufferings of every kind which took their rise from sin. The path of a Christian is sometimes thorny and difficult; and many of the weaker order of saints have even a greater sensibility of the inconveniencies of life than some thoughtless sinners. These last maintain a sort of bustle and contest for worldly pleasure, and, with a sturdy self-sufficiency, can, if I may speak so, return the blows and buffets of adverse fortune, while the feeble of Christ's flock become sunk and heartless under a frowning providence. But is not the Lord's table a place of refuge? and is it not matter of experience, that they have found consolation there? Whatever their complaints have been, whether of sickness, or poverty, or loss of relations, or the slanders of their enemies, they have adored the sovereign will of God in them all; they have been brought to a placid submission to his providence in them all; nay, they have happily seen and confessed his wise and merciful purpose in them all. It was not without a view to his trials, that the Psalmist, in the text, desires *to go unto the altar of God, unto God his excceeding joy.* And you may see how he expresses himself in the following verse,

" Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? and why art thou diſquieted within me? hope in God; for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

4th, I come now, in the laſt place, to obſerve, that this ordinance is a ſource of joy, as it is a pledge and earneſt of heaven; a fore-taſte of that eternal happineſs which God hath prepared for his faithful ſervants in the world to come. This, my brethren, ought never to be out of our view while we ſojourn in this valley of tears.

This eternal joy is what our Redeemer has given us the fulleſt aſſurance of. It is he who hath drawn aſide the curtain, and opened to us a joyful proſpect into the holy of holies, into the bleſſed manſions of perfection, purity, and happineſs within the vail. In one of his laſt diſcourſes to his diſciples when he was about to leave them, he tells them it was to be but a ſhort ſeparation; for that he would come again, and carry them with him; and that they ſhould never more be divided, John xiv. 2. " In my Father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you;" and not only hath he left the promiſe of his return, but hath inſtituted this ordinance, on the one hand, to keep up the memory of his former appearance; and, on the other, to keep up our hopes of his ſecond coming, and what he will then beſtow, 1 Cor. xi. 23. " As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." It is intended to ſupport the languiſhing faith of his people, and make them tread with conſtancy, in his ſtrength,

the ſame paths of virtue and ſelf-denial that he did, in hopes of ſhortly ſharing his crown and reward, Heb. xii. 1, 2. "And let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God." And how highly proper is this inſtitution for pointing us to the glorious iſſue of our Chriſtian conflict? In it we have at once a proof of the certainty—of the excellence—and even ſome perception of the nature of the heavenly glory.

How certain and infallible is that happineſs to the ſaints, which our exalted Redeemer, *the Amen and faithful Witneſs*, hath paſſed his word for, and gone before in our name to take poſſeſſion of? Heb. vi. 19, 20. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered."—1 Cor. xv. 23. "But every man in his own order, Chriſt the firſt fruits, afterward they that are Chriſt's at his coming." However high an hope it may ſeem for ſuch as we are, to aſpire to a ſtation ſo near the throne of God, to his preſence and fellowſhip; yet it is not too much, after what is already beſtowed upon us; after what Chriſt hath done, it can beget no ſurpriſe, that this ſhould be the concluſion of it; after he hath borne our ſins in his own body, and with his own blood waſhed away our guilt: after he hath ſanctified and cleanſed us by his Holy Spirit, made us the children, and imprinted the image of his Father upon our hearts;

after he hath kindled in our ſouls a flame of divine love, and made us content with nothing but himſelf, and with no place where he is not; ſurely he will not leave us comfortleſs; he can have no other deſign than to carry us to live with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.

Does not this repreſentation alſo ſerve to ſhew the excellency of the heavenly glory? It is called in ſcripture, "the purchaſed poſſeſſion." And, oh! my dear brethren, how great, beyond expreſſion, muſt that inheritance be, which was ſo dearly bought, for which every price but the blood of the eternal Son of God was rejected! See his body broken and his blood ſhed; and there ſee what heaven has coſt; and this it coſt to him who had dwelt there from eternity, and could not be deceived in its worth. It was no unneceſſary expence, idly thrown away, but what alone was equal to the glorious purchaſe. Had we nothing elſe by which to gueſs at that which eye hath not ſeen, this of itſelf ought to be ſufficient to raiſe our hopes to the higheſt pitch, and give us the moſt exalted conceptions of its infinite glory.

And may I not add upon this head, my brethren, that this ordinance is to many, an earneſt and foretaſte, as well as an aſſurance, of the happineſs of heaven. Is it not the ſenſible communion with God, which ſome of his ſaints even here enjoy, a reſemblance, though faint, of that full and perfect communion which they ſhall enjoy with their Creator and Redeemer in the world above? John xiv. 23. "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto

him, and make our abode with him." What is heaven but to be free from ſin, to contemplate the glory of an infinite God, to be filled with a ſenſe of his love, and to be beyond the reach of temptation to offend him any more! Now when the believer ſees his pardon ſealed with his Redeemer's blood; when he is filled with a hatred of all ſin, and a humble confidence of being delivered from its power; when his very complaints are put to ſilence, and the frailties of a dying body are left behind, or ſwallowed up by the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection; what is this but the very dawn of heaven in the ſoul! what is this but the ſhout of victory! and an earneſt of that day of complete triumph, when all his enemies ſhall be brought under his feet!

I am ſenſible that the frame of many communicants will be but a bad emblem of heaven; and, if they meaſure it by that ſtandard, it will give them but low and ſorry notions of it. This however is not the caſe with all; and there are few real Chriſtians, but, in ſome parts of their lives, have felt ſuch inward joy in God, that they have been ready to ſay with the diſciples in the mount of transfiguration, *It is good for us to be here.* Neither is there any place where it may be more reaſonably expected than at a communion table: every pious ſoul ſhould breathe out this prayer of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "O God, thou art my God; early will I ſeek thee: my ſoul thirſteth for thee, my fleſh longeth for thee in a dry and thirſty land, where no water is: to ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary; becauſe thy loving-kindneſs is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee. Thus

let us ſurvey the picture of his agony drawn by himſelf, and let us remember what it promiſes, and what he is now gone to prepare for his faithful followers.

2. Let us, by way of improvement, conſider a little for whom this joy is provided; does not this need explication? And are not many of you ſaying within yourſelves, ſurely obſtinacy itſelf cannot deny, that here is great cauſe of joy to ſome: but who are they? is it not a joy with which a ſtranger cannot intermeddle, that pertains only to a privileged few? This inquiry is higly needful, as the great ſpring of joyleſs communions is the want of a perſonal application of the bleſſings of our Redeemer's purchaſe. That I may neither unwarrantably diſcourage any, nor proſtitute this precious privilege to the unworthy, I ſhall obſerve, that this joy is truly applicable to all to whom it is deſirable; to all whom it may be uſeful, but in different lights, according to their different characters.

1*ſt*, All thoſe who have not only laid hold on Chriſt for ſalvation, but have ſome degree of humble confidence in the divine mercy, on whom the Lord has lifted up the light of his reconciled countenance. If there are any ſuch among us, as God forbid but there were, they ought; but why do I ſay they ought? for, no doubt, they certainly will *go to God as their exceeding joy*. To you, my brethren, it belongs, with wonder and gratitude, to ſurvey theſe bleſſings to which you know your title, and to join in that heavenly anthem, Rev. i. 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts

unto God, and his father, to him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. vii. 12. "Bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Let your faith follow your riſen Redeemer to his Father's throne, and look forward to what he is doing and preparing for you, as well as backward to what he hath already done. If Satan be under your feet; if ſin be crucified on your Saviour's croſs; and cares and ſorrows kept at a diſtance, I hope it will help you to ſome conception of the felicity of that ſtate, "where there ſhall be no more curſe, but the throne of God, and of the Lamb ſhall be in it, and his ſervants ſhall ſerve him."

2*dly*, In this ordinance there is matter of joy and conſolation to the fearful and doubting Chriſtian, who, not without deſires after God, and the remembrance of his name, yet is full of ſolicitude and anxiety, and dare not poſitively affirm his own intereſt in the Saviour. What is ſet before us in this ordinance, particularly what I have this day opened up on the ſubject, will ſhew how well it is fitted for ſtrengthening the weak, and confirming the feeble-minded. But, to explain this propriety a little, let me aſk you, is your doubt of God's willingneſs to receive returning ſinners? This doubt the Lord's ſupper is a full reſolution of; this table ſpread by his appointment, is an expreſs ſtipulation on his part, of pardon and peace, to all who are willing to accept of them on the terms of the goſpel. Well, but what are the terms of the goſpel? Infinitely free and gracious on the one hand, and exceeding ſtrict

and ſevere on the other; full forgiveneſs to the chief of ſinners, without any merit or qualification on their part; complete deliverance from the power of corruption; and ſanctification by the Holy Spirit of grace. What then are the ſevere terms? Truly to accept of them juſt as fully and freely as they are offered; to receive forgiveneſs as mere mercy, which we have not deſerved, and deſire deliverance from every ſin without exception? and to expect to obtain it, not from ourſelves, but by the ſtrength that is in Chriſt: the true ſelf-denial of the goſpel is the hardeſt ſacrifice to human pride. Men may cry up morality, and boaſt of it, and truſt in it, and never practiſe it; but heartily to approve of the whole law of God, and breathe after conformity to it, as the purchaſe of Chriſt's death, and the effect of our union with him, and giving the honour of it only to him, this, if I miſtake not, is the obedience of faith. Now, do you doubt whether you have accepted Chriſt on theſe terms. This is not doubting, but refuſing: and I have no conſolation for you. But if you are willing that Chriſt ſhould be all, and you ſhould be nothing, and ſincerely grieve for the ſin and impurity that ſtill cleaves to you, and even for your unbelief, and the hardneſs of your hearts, come to this table, and "my God ſhall ſupply all your wants from his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus."

3*dly*, That I may, if poſſible, yet farther illuſtrate and commend the divine grace, here is matter of joy to all without exception: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, that God is in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf!" You have cauſe to be thankful, that, for your former contempt of mer-

cy, you have not been cut off from the land of the living, and condemned for ever to the flames. O that you were ſenſible what grace and patience is exerciſed towards you in your daily preſervation! that your paſt refuſals have not been accepted as your final choice, and your ſtate determined beyond redemption! I do now, upon this ſolemn occaſion, when the body and blood of Chriſt, as broken and ſhed for ſinners, is to be ſet before you, by his warrant and authority, beſeech you by the mercies of God, and pray you to be reconciled unto him. Shall I be obliged, on this ſeaſon of joy, amidſt ſo bright a diſplay of divine love, to unſheath the ſword of almighty vengeance, and denounce the terrors of the Lord. No, my brethren, I rather chuſe now to beſeech than to command, to invite than to threaten you; to ſhew you the wrath of God falling upon your Saviour than upon yourſelves; and ſhall not his love conſtrain you, ſhall not his mercy perſuade you not to reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves? Will you prefer the pleaſures of ſin, carnal mirth, and ſenſual riot, to all the bleſſed fruits of divine love? You will ſay, I ſuſpect that you have but a cold notion of all this profuſion of language about joy in God; it is becauſe you know it not. Do but taſte and ſee, that the Lord is good! I am ſenſible, however, it is in vain to ſpeak to any but thoſe who are weary of their ſins; and therefore I ſhall only, in our Saviour's words, call all thoſe "who are weary and heavy laden to come unto him, that they may have reſt." As this ordinance is proper for ratifying former engagements, ſo it is alſo proper for entering into covenant with God, and ſolemnly giving your-

ſelves to be his. And oh that this may be a day and place, marked in the regiſters of heaven, when and where many joined themſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten or recalled!

3. The laſt uſe to be made of this ſubject, is to ſhew you what is your proper employment at the Lord's table. It ought to be a joyful, thankful appiication of the bleſſings of Chriſt's purchaſe to your ſouls. Be ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; not only celebrate his love, but improve it, by aſking in faith, every thing neceſſary to your ſanctification and peace.—I ſhall ſhut up all, by deſiring you to uſe the Pſalmiſt's preface, in going unto God, who ſays, in the 3d verſe, "O ſend out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me into thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." In order to raiſe and elevate your minds, to fix and engage your unſettled hearts, apply to God who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, that he would diſpoſe you for his ſervice; that he would ſhed abroad his love in your hearts, and make you joyful in his houſe of prayer. And my earneſt prayer to God for you, is, that he would, at this time, convert ſome, or (why ſhould we limit him?) every profane ſinner in this aſſembly; pull off the maſk of hypocrites, and ſhew them their own likeneſs; that he would make it a joyful communion to many of you, and a profitable communion to all. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE CHRISTIAN's DISPOSITION UNDER A SENSE OF MERCIES RECEIVED.

PSALM cxvi. 7.

Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

IT is the language of nature, as well as of grace, to cry to God in diſtreſs. When great extremity ſhews the weakneſs of all other help, there remains ſo much of God written on the conſciences even of the moſt profligate, as excites them to this duty. The truth of this obſervation appears from many ſcripture examples, as well as every day's experience. But though bad men may cry to God for deliverance from ſuffering, they know little, if any thing at all, of returning to God in duty and gratitude for the mercy received, Pſal. lxxviii. 34,—37. "When he ſlew them, then they ſought him; and they returned, and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheleſs, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him; neither were they ſtedfaſt in his covenant." See alſo the account of the ten lepers, Luke xvii. 12,—17. "And as he entered into a certain vil-

lage, there met him ten men that were lepers, which ſtood afar off, and they lifted up their voices, and ſaid, Jeſus, Maſter, have mercy on us. And, when he ſaw them, he ſaid unto them, Go ſhew yourſelves unto the prieſts; and it came to paſs, that as they went thy were cleanſed. And one of them, when he ſaw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan: and Jeſus anſwering, ſaid, Were there not ten cleanſed? but where are the nine?" They all cried alike for the cure; but the greateſt part ſoon forgot their obligation to their merciful ſaviour.

It is no way difficult to account for this behaviour in bad men; but, alas! it is melancholy to think how much of this unhappy diſpoſition is to be found even in the beſt. When the preſſure of any trial is felt, they flee to God as their refuge and ſecurity; with fervent ſupplication, and earneſt wreſtling they intreat his help. But, though we muſt not charge any ſincere ſervant of God with an entire forgetfulneſs of his goodneſs, or open deſertion of his ſervice; yet, I am afraid, that many are very defective in this particular; and that few, very few, preſerve the ſame ſolicitude to improve their mercies as to obtain them.

My intention is to apply this to us, who have lately been at the Lord's table: and, I hope, before going there, not a few were earneſt in their prayers for the divine preſence. Urged by the ſufferings of this mortal body, the loſs of outward comforts, the power of inward temptations, or a deſire of the re-

turn of an abſent God, or the quickening of a ſlothful ſpirit, they ſought conſolation in this holy ordinance; they went to ſeek the Lord, going and weeping. I hope alſo, and believe, that many went not in vain, but "found him whom their ſoul loved, found him, and would not let him go." All ſuch ought to imitate the Pſalmiſt in the ſpirit that breathes through the whole of this Pſalm: and particularly in the words of my text: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

I need only ſay, in a very few words, that the whole pſalm is an expreſſion of his gratitude for deliverance from great ſufferings, from enemies cruel and treacherous. They were alſo of an inward, as well as an outward kind, as all his trials did ordinarily bring ſin to remembrance, and fill him with a humbling ſenſe of the awful judgments of a holy and righteous God. He ſeems alſo to have been particularly exerciſed in prayer to God, his all-ſufficient help: ver. 3, 4. "The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and ſorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beſeech thee, deliver my ſoul." He thereupon celebrates the mercy of God, and wearing the bonds of love, deſires to expreſs his obligations in the ſtrongeſt terms, and to ſatisfy them by the moſt cheerful obedience: ver. 12. "What ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

In diſcourſing further at this time, I ſhall juſt obſerve, that the words of the text contain the Pſalmiſt's reſolution: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul*—

and the reaſon on which it is founded;——*for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Theſe two, as applicable to the ſervants of God in general, and ourſelves in particular, I ſhall diſtinctly conſider, not in the order of the words, but in the order of nature.

I. I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully.*

II. Explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, which ought to be theirs: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.*

And then ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. Then, I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully;* and I am juſt to deſcribe this, in its great lines, from experience, beſeeching every one preſent to hear it with application; and to add ſuch circumſtances to the ſeveral particulars, as will make them completely ſuitable to his own ſtate—Obſerve, then,

1. That the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thoſe from whom he hath removed any affliction under which they groaned, and for deliverance from which they prayed.——If we would count our mercies, they are very many: and we often loſe both the reliſh of them, and the benefit of them, by not obſerving them. Thoſe who are delivered from ſickneſs, or the fear of it, in themſelves or their relations, ought to be ſenſible of the goodneſs of God, who maketh them to lie down and riſe up in ſafety.—If any had reaſon

to fear confinement from ordinances, or from uſefulneſs, they ſhould ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm cxviii. 16,—19. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. I ſhall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; the Lord hath chaſtened me ſore; but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteouſneſs; I will go into them, and I will praiſe the Lord."—If any were oppreſſed with calumny and reproach, and God hath hidden them from the ſtrife of tongues, hath pleaded their cauſe, or brought forth their "judgment as the light, and their righteouſneſs as the noon-day." The Pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. cxviii. 10,—14. "All nations compaſſed me about; but in the name of the Lord will I deſtroy them. They compaſſed me about, yea, they compaſſed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them. They compaſſed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them. Thou haſt thruſt ſore at me that I might fall, but the Lord helped me; the Lord is my ſtrength and ſong, and is become my ſalvation."—If any are delivered from the fear of want, and a reaſonable proſpect given them of competent and ſuitable proviſion for themſelves and families; if they can remember the time, whether lately or at a greater diſtance, when they ſeemed to be threatened with poverty and dependance, and all the ſhame, diſtreſs, and temptation that attends that enſnaring ſtate; if, I ſay, they can remember this, and ſee how God, by a gracious providence, has led them by the hand; has given them food to eat and raiment to put on, and even honour-

ed them with the ability and the heart to ſtretch out their hands to the poor and needy, the fatherleſs and the widow; ſurely he hath dealt bountifully with them. They ought to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxiii. 5. "Thou prepareſt a table before me in the preſence of mine enemies: thou anointeſt my head with oil, my cup runneth over."—If any have been burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, the arrows of the Lord within them, and the poiſon thereof drinking up their ſouls, and God hath revealed himſelf to them, as pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin; if they have been enabled to lay hold, with clearneſs and confidence, of the great atonement, they have ſurely taſted of his love: Or, if a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear has given a forbidding aſpect to the paths of piety, or hath brought a gloom and darkneſs upon the paths of providence, and it hath pleaſed God to ſpeak peace to their ſouls by the Spirit of conſolation, they will ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. ciii. 1. "Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name."—Or, finally, if any hath complained of a dead, ſlothful, ſecure frame, reſting too eaſily in the form, and minding little of the power of godlineſs, and it hath pleaſed God to touch their hearts and lips with a live-coal from off his altar; to command their attention by his word; to excite their affections in his worſhip, and to give a new ſtrain of watchfulneſs and tenderneſs to the whole of their converſation; they have ſurely the greateſt reaſon to ſay, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

2. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, if

you can obſerve a particular mark and ſignature of his providence in your mercies. It is one thing to receive the bounty of providence, and another to diſcern and confeſs the hand that beſtows it. Even with regard to the bleſſings that are in a great meaſure common to every thing that lives, it is a matter of the higheſt moment, and of great influence in religion, to have a deep and ſerious conviction from whom they flow, to be ſenſible of the abſolute and conſtant dependance of every creature upon God: It places us immediately in our Maker's preſence; for, as the apoſtle Paul ſays, Acts xvii. 27. "He is not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being."

But though this is not to be neglected, I have ſomething farther in view, viz. When we can obſerve the particular ſteps of providence, as well as the gracious intention of it, as the fruit of ſpecial and diſtinguiſhing love. The footſteps of providence are to be ſeen often in the means,—in the ſeaſon,—and in the nature of the mercy. *1ſt*, When the means by which any mercy is brought about are extraordinary, and far beyond the reach of human wiſdom, it ſerves to ſhew that God himſelf hath been their help. Sometimes the children of God are left to prove the weakneſs of all created help, and to be urged in a manner to the brink of deſpair, that their deliverance may be the more ſignal, and may the more evidently point out the very finger of God. What a mercy is it, when the enemies of good men wait for their halting, and hope to overcome them, and yet they are remarkably delivered, and out of weakneſs are made ſtrong? See how the Pſalmiſt

prays, Pſal. lxxxvi. 16, 17. "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me. Give thy ſtrength unto thy ſervant, and ſave the ſon of thine handmaid. Shew me a token for good, that they which hate me may ſee it, and be aſhamed; becauſe thou, Lord, haſt holpen me, and comforted me."

2*dly*, Sometimes the providence of God is ſeen in the ſeaſon of the mercy. It is beſtowed when it is moſt needed, or when it may be of greateſt uſe. When the faith of his people is beginning to fail, it frequently meets with unexpected and eminent ſupport. Pſal. lxxiii. 2. "But as for me, my feet were almoſt gone: my ſteps had well nigh ſlipt." v. 10. "Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them." Pſal. xciv. 16, 17, 18, 19. "Who will riſe up for me againſt the evil doers? or who will ſtand up for me againſt the workers of iniquity? Unleſs the Lord had been my help, my ſoul had almoſt dwelt in ſilence. When I ſaid, my foot ſlippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul." When they have duties of importance before them, they have ſometimes ſuch ſupplies of grace and ſtrength given them, as to carry them through with comfort and with credit. Sometimes to prepare them for trials which may be before them, they have uncommon meaſures of conſolation from above; and ſometimes under or after trials, for their ſupport and comfort, they meet with all in the Creator, and much more than they loſt in the creature. And I hope, my brethren, many have cauſe to adore the wiſdom, as well as the grace of God in public ordinances, that

directs his miniſters, as well as his Spirit, to ſuch inſtructions as may be moſt ſuitable, both to the wants and the deſires of his ſaints. How excellent is ſound inſtruction at any rate! But what a new beauty and excellency does it acquire in the eyes of that perſon, to whoſe inward complaints it is directly ſuited? We may ſay of it as Solomon ſays, Prov. xv. 23. "A man hath joy by the anſwer of his mouth; and a word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it?"—xxv. 11. A word fitly ſpoken is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver." Iſa. l. 4. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary."

3*dly*, Once more: The ſignature of providence is ſometimes ſeen in the nature of the mercy, when it is exactly ſuited to the ſtate and character of the perſon concerned. Our temper, ſtation, duties, have in them a very great diverſity; and there is frequently an opportunity to obſerve how God diſpenſes his gifts with wiſdom and propriety. If he gives to the rich, humility, thankfulneſs, or liberality; to the poor, patience, truſt, and reſignation: If he keeps the weak from temptation and trial; and fills with fortitude thoſe who are to meet with reſiſtance, and, in general, accommodates his mercies to their apparent neceſſity, can it be denied, that he deals bountifully with them. We are taught this truth in a very tender paſſage, Pſal. ciii. 13, 14. "Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are duſt." In many inſtances, indeed, this kindneſs and condeſcenſion is to be ob-

ſerved both in the nature of mercies, and in the meaſure of afflictions, Iſa. xxvii. 8. "In meaſure, when it ſhooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he ſtayeth his rough wind, in the day of the eaſt wind." This leads me to obſerve,

3. That the Lord deals bountifully with his people, when he gives them a clear and ſatisfying view of the ſalutary end, and enables them to make a ſanctified uſe both of their trials and mercies. I need not tell you, that calamities of various kinds are inſeparable from this ſtate of mortality and of ſin; neither need I tell you, that the children of God never were, nor ever ſhall be exempted from their ſhare. But, as their mercies have a quite different nature and influence, from thoſe which are beſtowed upon a careleſs ſecure world; ſo their trials have a peculiar direction, and are capable of a ſpiritual improvement: nay, they are repreſented in ſcripture, as the fruit and evidence of love, Heb. xii. 5. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto you as unto children, My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Pſal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. "If his children forſake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes: nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail.

Now, my brethren, ſometimes the children of God may ſtruggle for a ſeaſon under afflictions, and find much difficulty to adhere ſtedfaſtly to their duty:

nay, what do I ſay? truly they may ſin not a little by impatience in their hearts, and ſpeaking unadviſedly with their lips, as well as by ſinking under the ſtroke, and manifeſting unbelief and diſtruſt in the Rock of their ſalvation. They may be alſo greatly at a loſs to interpret the language of providence, and diſcover the cauſe of God's controverſy with them. They may ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxvii. 6,——9. "I call to remembrance my ſong in the night; I commune with mine own heart, and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch. Will the Lord caſt off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promiſe fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah." Or, with Job, Job x. 1,—3. "My ſoul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myſelf; I will ſpeak in the bitterneſs of my ſoul. I will ſay unto God, do not condemn me: ſhew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me. Is it good unto thee, that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs? that thou ſhouldeſt deſpiſe the work of thine hands and ſhine upon the counſel of the wicked?"

But what a mercy is it, when it pleaſeth God to reconcile our minds to the will of his providence; to ſet home upon the conſcience his right of ſovereignty; his title to diſpoſe of our perſons, our reputation, our ſubſtance, our relations, without exception and without condition, even as he will. O how happy! to be able ſo ſay with our ſuffering Saviour, "O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me! nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, "If this cup may not paſs away

from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Is this unreasonable? Nothing less. Should he not do what he will with his own? Is it impossible? Blessed be God, it is far from it. How happy, my brethren, to have our corruptions mortified by suffering! to have the spirit broken by contrition and penitence, when the body is broken by sickness or distress; to weaken our attachment to the world, when it is shewing its instability and uncertainty as our possession; to hate the sin for which, and not the God by whom the stroke is inflicted, let it be of what nature soever it will? O how happy to have divine consolation under suffering! an angel from heaven strengthening us! the soul following hard after God! when the believer is enabled to delight himself in God, even in the absence of all outward comfort! and to say with Hab. iii. 17, 18. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" O how happy is it, when we experience the sanctifying effects of suffering, to be able to look back upon it, and find the bitterness and severity over, or mitigated by time, but the fruits of it remaining, and daily gathering strength! One affliction, truly sanctified, prepares the mind for others to follow, and makes them both more tolerable, and more useful. He who has sought and found consolation in God under one affliction, is refreshed, braced, and armed for another combat; he is not so much afraid of new and unknown enemies, because

he knows where to find ſure and effectual ſupport. There is ſomething very noble and animated in that part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, which relates to his ſufferings for the goſpel, Acts xx. 22, 23, 24. "And now, behold, I go bound in the ſpirit unto Jeruſalem, not knowing the things that ſhall befal me there; ſave that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſaying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of theſe things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God." I cannot go through either every kind of ſuffering, or every kind of benefit we may receive from it; but we have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſcripture ſaints, both in the Old and New Teſtament, bearing witneſs to the ſalutary conſequence of affliction. Thus David ſays, Pſal. cxix. 67. "Before I was afflicted, I went aſtray; but now have I kept thy word:" and, ver. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes." And the apoſtle Paul, Rom. v. 3. "And not only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." And ſo certain is this truth, that I am perſuaded, there is no ſerious exerciſed perſon among us, but is willing to ſtrengthen the evidence by his own teſtimony.

I may add, that the Lord deals very bountifully with thoſe to whom he gives the ſanctified uſe of their mercies; when in general mercies have not led to ſecurity or pride, but to thankfulneſs, and even to a holy concern to improve them to the glory of

God; when great abundance of outward poſſeſſions has not led to ſenſuality, or profanity, or hardneſs of heart; but, on the contrary, to humility, uſefulneſs, liberality; when a numerous or growing family, children ſpringing up as olive plants round about the table, only fill the parents with a tender concern to train them up in the fear of God, and ſeaſon their young hearts with early impreſſions of religion; when, inſtead of a fooliſh jealouſy or ambition to have your children more ſumptuouſly dreſſed than others, your great care is to have them kept from the ſociety of the vitious, and to have them no way behind the very beſt accompliſhed in every branch of uſeful knowledge; when you are favoured with the eſteem and affection of others, and God enables you to improve your influence by zeal and diligence in doing good.

Theſe are all ſanctified mercies: and, as the Lord deals bountifully with thoſe on whom they are beſtowed from time to time; ſo, in acts of ſolemn worſhip, it is an unſpeakable happineſs, when ſuch views are taken of our ſtate and ſituation, and of the aſpect of providence towards us, as ſerve to confirm and ſtrengthen every holy diſpoſition, and lead us in the paths of truth and righteouſneſs. In the

4. And laſt place. The *Lord hath dealt bountifully* with thoſe whom he hath admitted to the moſt intimate and ſpiritual communion with himſelf; thoſe whom he hath carried above the ſphere of temptation, filled them with ſenſible joy in the Holy Ghoſt here, and earneſt deſires after the complete and perpetual enjoyment of his preſence in heaven. My brethren, it is no contemptible communion with

God, when the ſoul is poured out in penitential ſorrow, filled with hatred of ſin, with a love of God's laws, or ſubmiſſion to his providence; when the Spirit ſhines with clearneſs either on commands or promiſes, and makes the heart approve and reſt in them; but there are alſo ſpecial happy ſeaſons, when the believer may be ſaid to leave his mercies, trials, ſins, and duties, altogether at a diſtance, and to rejoice in the contemplation of an infinite God. He is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt ardent love of every reaſonable creature; he is the immediate object of delight and wonder to the celeſtial hoſts; and ſometimes he vouchſafes ſome degree of the like exalted joy even to the ſaints on earth. It ſeems to have been the deſire of Moſes, when he ſays, Exod. xxxiii. 18. "I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory." And the ſame ſeems to have been the happy attainment of the diſciples on the mount of transfiguration; of which ſee the account, Matth. xvii. 1,—4. "And after ſix days, Jeſus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them, and his face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as the light; and behold, there appeared unto them Moſes and Elias talking with him. Then anſwered Peter, and ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moſes, and one for Elias." The luſtre of their Maſter's appearance, and what they heard of his intercourſe with the two inhabitants of heaven, ſeems to have made them quite forget that they had any thing to do on earth; or, at

leaſt, made them very unwilling to return to their former ſtate.

How ſhall I explain this, or bring it down to the conception of worldly men? Perhaps it is wrong to attempt it; but, leſt any ſhould go away, ſpeaking with contempt or indignation of communion with God, as extravagance, enthuſiaſm, and folly, I ſhall take leave to ſupport it by the following illuſtration. Suppoſe any of you were, as perhaps you have been, admitted to the ſight of ſome exceeding ſtrange and wonderful appearance in nature or art, will not this ſometimes fill you with inexpreſſible ſurpriſe and delight? will it not, for a time, quite ſuſpend your attention to any thing elſe? Your buſineſs, cares, fears, and other pleaſures, will be all forgotten for a ſeaſon. Now, if this is the caſe, I deſire to know, why the glory of the true God, diſcovered in his word, and illuſtrated by his Spirit, may not, or ought not to be the ſubject of the greateſt wonder, and moſt exalted pleaſure to thoſe who truly love him? The truth is, there is ſo much to be ſeen, that is ſurpriſing and aſtoniſhing, both in the nature and works of God, in creation, providence, and redemption, that the only thing that hinders us from dwelling with delight on this great ſubject, is the ſinfulneſs of our nature, which too ſtrongly prompts us to flee from him. When therefore the believer is freed from the apprehenſions of guilt, and goes to God, as his God, in gratitude and duty, it is no wonder that he taſtes a little of that unſpeakable joy that is at his right hand. I doubt not, but many will ſay this is true. O let but the light of his reconciled countenance ſhine upon me, let me be but free from the doubt,

ſuſpicion, and fear, ſuggeſted by my ſins, and heaven would immediately begin to dawn upon my ſoul!

As intimate communion with God may be ſaid to bring down ſomething of heaven to earth, ſo it always carries the deſires of the ſoul from earth to heaven. It is not only made up of faith and contemplation in the preſent ſtate, but of hope, which breathes after farther diſcoveries in a ſtate of greater perfection. It not only increaſes deſire, but helps our conceptions. The ſoul, if I may ſpeak ſo, climbs up to the ſummit of preſent enjoyments, that it may ſee the farther into what ſtill remains. It ſays, as it were, if ſuch the glory and luſtre of the outer court, what muſt be the unvailed ſplendour of the holy of holies. You ſee the apoſtle Paul makes this uſe of comparative reflections, 1 Cor. xiii. 9,——12. "For we know in part; and we propheſy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away. When I was a child, I ſpake as a child, I underſtood as a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childiſh things: for now we ſee through a glaſs darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known." 1 John iii. 2. "And it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is."

Alas! my brethren, that intimate communion with God ſhould be ſo rare, and that ſo few of us ſhould attain to the diſpoſition of the apoſtle of the Gentiles, who deſired "to depart and to be with

Chriſt, which is far better." Let us be aſhamed of it. Surely many of us have taſted a good deal, and ſeen a good deal more of the vanity of the world, which ought to wean our affections from it. Happy, happy they! who can uſe the language of the apoſtle to the Philippians, Phil. iii. 20, 21. "For our converſation is in heaven, from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." And, Titus ii. 14. "Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." That there are ſome who have been formerly, and of late ſo happily viſited with the divine preſence, I have little doubt; and to as many as have been ſo, ſurely I am warranted to ſay, *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you.*

II. I come now to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. to explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, or his exhortation to his own ſoul, which all in the ſame ſituation ought to imitate, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.* It may, perhaps be ſuppoſed only to imply, that he reſolves to forget his anxiety and care, and ſolace himſelf in that ſtate of quiet and ſecurity to which he was happily brought by the kindneſs of Providence; but though, no doubt, this may be conſidered as in part the meaning of the words, I cannot think it is the whole. It would be doing great injury to the holy Pſalmiſt, to ſuppoſe that he was not carried upward in his views to the Author

of his reſt, or to God himſelf, as the reſt of his ſoul. The whole pſalm, indeed breathes his piety and gratitude to God; and his deſire of teſtifying it by every proper and acceptable expreſſion. Taking the words therefore in this light, we may ſuppoſe them to imply the following particulars:

1. Return and give the praiſe where it is due; and humbly acknowledge God as the author of thy mercies. He had, as we ſee by the preceding verſes, earneſtly implored help from God in his diſtreſs; and now deſires to confeſs that it came from no other quarter. We are exceeding ready to fail in this particular: ſometimes we look upon the outward means and viſible inſtruments of our deliverance, and forget the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events, who employs them, directs them, and bleſſes them. Sometimes we embrace the mercy itſelf with ſo much complacency, that we forget both our former neceſſity, and the author of our deliverance. In oppoſition to both theſe, it is our indiſpenſible duty to aſcribe every mercy we receive, and every deliverance with which we are favoured, to God as its proper author, and to offer him the tribute of praiſe, and to bleſs his name for ever. James i. 17. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." I admire the manner of ſpeaking frequently found in ſcripture, where the kindneſs of men towards us is immediately and expreſsly attributed to the agency of God, Gen. xxxix. 21. "But the Lord was with Joſeph, and ſhewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the ſight of the keeper of the priſon." Acts vii. 6, 10. "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, ſold Joſeph

into Egypt; but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house." Dan. i. 9. "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

How great a duty, and how important a part of religion, praise and thanksgiving to God are, may be seen in every page of the holy scripture, both in the way of precept and example, Deut. viii. 10. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee." Psal. cxxxvi. 1, 2, 3. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods; for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords; for his mercy endureth for ever." Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." Psal. cxlv. 1, 2. "I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." And that this duty ought particularly to be discharged by those who have been highly favoured of God in any respect is very plain. Though the glory of God is the subject of habitual adoration, and the constant course of his bounty the subject of habitual gratitude, yet new and special mercies, give as it were a new spring, and

add ſtrength and vigour to the ſoul in this exerciſe. Our praiſes ought to be particular, as well as general; and thoſe who obſerve and record the ſpecial inſtances of divine mercy toward them, will find a fulneſs of heart in this duty, to which they are perfect ſtrangers, who ſatisfy themſelves with a general and indiſcriminate acknowledgment of the divine bounty. Many of the pſalms of David are monuments of his gratitude for particular interpoſitions of providence in his behalf, and bear particular marks of reference to the time and circumſtances of his diſtreſs.

I only add upon this ſubject, that the Pſalmiſt might well ſay in this ſenſe, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul;* for a tender and affectionate acknowledgment of the mercies of God, not only makes us find our reſt in him, but makes his mercies reſt with us; it increaſes the ſweetneſs of every comfort,—it purifies its nature,—it prolongs its duration.—It increaſes the ſweetneſs of it: for this I appeal to the experience of every child of God. Do you ever taſte ſo much real delight in any mercy, as when you pour out your heart to God in gratitude for beſtowing it; even in gifts from men we are ſometimes ſenſible of a higher value in them, on account of the perſon who gave them, than any worth they have in themſelves. This holds, in the ſtrongeſt manner, with regard to God; the more we return our mercies in praiſe to the giver, the more we poſſeſs them, and the greater richneſs we diſcover in them.——It alſo purifies their nature. Many inſtances of divine goodneſs regard our ſtate and circumſtances in the preſent life; they are the objects of ſenſible gratifi-

cation, as well as religious gratitude. Now, when we obſerve and celebrate the kindneſs of him that beſtows them, they not only ſtrengthen the body, but ſanctify the ſoul. Is it not ſomething more than barely outward proviſion, when we ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxiii. 5. "Thou prepareſt a table before me in the preſence of mine enemies; thou anointeſt my head with oil? my cup runneth over?"——Again, it prolongs the duration of our mercies. One of the conſequences of the weakneſs and imperfection of the preſent ſtate, is, that we are ready ſoon to forget our mercies, and to loſe the reliſh of them. In how many inſtances do we find that what gave us great and ſenſible pleaſure at firſt, becomes in time habitual, and at laſt indifferent to us? Now praiſing and confeſſing the goodneſs of God in them, ſerves to write them upon our hearts, to continue the ſweetneſs of common mercies; and keep up the memory of ſignal mercies, or thoſe of an extraordinary kind. Health, ſtrength, proviſion, and comfort, when they are not interrupted, are apt to be quite overlooked; but the daily acknowledgment of divine goodneſs, gives us not only the poſſeſſion but the uſe of them. Signal mercies, in time, ſlip out of the memory, but the more we have acknowledged them, they will be the more eaſily recalled to remembrance. I have known inſtances of pious perſons, appointing fixed days of thankſgiving for extraordinary deliverances, which ſerved to renew their ſenſe of them, and gave them ſome degree, at leaſt, of the ſame joy and gratitude which they felt when the event happened. Some alſo, by keeping a record in writing of the paths of

divine providence toward them, are able to read them over at proper times in their order, to compare them together, and thus as it were, to have a rich feaſt upon a whole life of mercies, the remembrance of many of which would otherwiſe have been effaced by time.

2. This expreſſion may imply returning to God, and delighting in him as our reconciled God, and ſupreme portion and happineſs. This is indeed the reſt of the gracious ſoul, which gives him more joy than all outward poſſeſſions taken together. His outward poſſeſſions have no value, but as they flow from it, and lead back to it. He ſays with the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. iv. 6, 7, 8, "There be many that ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed. I will both lay me down in peace and ſleep: for thou Lord only makeſt me dwell in ſafety." Pſal. lxxiii. 23,—25. "Nevertheleſs I am continually with thee: thou haſt holden me by my right hand. Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee." Now, my brethren, this reſt is frequently diſturbed, and meets with interruption in the preſent life Sin is the chief cauſe of interruption; it raiſes an interpoſing cloud, and ſeparates between God and us. But it is alſo ſometimes interrupted by affliction, and diſtreſſes of various kinds. Theſe two cauſes have a mutual relation, and a mutual influence one upon another. Afflictions bring ſin to remembrance, and ſin-ſqueez-

es the bittereſt ingredients into the cup of affliction; ſo that it ſometimes becomes a cup of trembling. The believer is often ready to miſtake the rod of fatherly correction for the exterminating ſtroke of avenging juſtice: hence the bitter and heart-melting complaints of many of the children of God. Job vi. 4. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh up my ſpirit, the terrors of God do ſet themſelves in aray againſt me." Pſal. xlii. 6, 7. "O my God, my ſoul is caſt down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noiſe of thy water-ſpouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Lam. iii. 1,—4. "I am the man that hath ſeen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me and brought me into darkneſs, but not into light. Surely againſt me is he turned, he turneth his hand againſt me all the day. My fleſh and my ſkin hath he made old, he hath broken my bones."

While this continues, the believer is excluded from his reſt; and indeed the more peace he can take in any thing, while at a diſtance from God, ſo much the worſe ſign it is of his character; ſo much the more fearful ſymptom of his ſtate. But when the Lord hath looſened his bonds, lifted up his countenance upon him, and given him peace, is it not proper and natural for him to ſay, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* When he hath ſeen the marks of diſtinguiſhing love in his mercies; when he hath taſted conſolation under ſuffering, or communion with God, in

public or in ſecret, will not this diſpoſe him to reſt in God, to improve the happy ſeaſon, and deſire its continuance? All things elſe are vain, and have proved their vanity, but complete ſatisfaction is here.

I have no doubt, my brethren, that this is, if not the only, yet one of the chief ſenſes, in which we ought to underſtand theſe words. Reſt, you know, ſuppoſes labour, and even wearineſs before. Reſt alſo ſeems to imply that which is the end of labour, or the deſire of the weary. It alſo ſignifies that which is to continue, or that we wiſh to continue without further change. In this ſenſe it is uſed, Pſal. cxxxii. 8. and 14. "Ariſe, O Lord, into thy reſt, thou and the ark of thy ſtrength. This is my reſt for ever; here will I dwell; for I have deſired it:" which refers to the ark of the teſtimony taking a fixed abode, and being no more carried about from place to place. The ſame ſenſe is conveyed to us by Heb. iv. 9. "There remaineth therefore a reſt to the people of God." When, therefore, the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul*, it means that God and his favour, was his ſupreme and ultimate deſire, the very centre of his hope. Is it not ſo with every real ſervant of God? All true religion points to, and ends in this. All religion, without this, is an empty form. And when we return to this, after any interruption, is it not like the diſtreſſed mariner, after having been driven about in a tempeſtuous ocean, and threatened every moment with deſtruction by the riſing billows, at laſt obtaining ſight, and entering with heart-felt joy into a haven of ſecurity and peace?

3. In the laſt place, this expreſſion implies a con-

fidence and reliance on God for protection and security againſt future dangers: This ſeems neceſſary to the completeneſs and perfection of any deliverance. The danger may be warded off for a ſeaſon; if there is ground to fear its immediate or ſpeedy return, the ſtate is very precarious, and the comfort very imperfect; but thoſe who are delivered from fear of evil, and think they can depend upon their defence and guard, have received a deliverance indeed.

Now, this is the view which a believer is particularly led to take of God, as his ſure and all-ſufficient help. He conſiders the greatneſs of his power, the operation of his providence, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe. How often does the Pſalmiſt expreſs, in the moſt triumphant manner, his dependance upon God? Pſal. xviii. 1, 2, 3. "I will love thee, O Lord, my ſtrength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler, and the horn of my ſalvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praiſed; ſo ſhall I be ſaved from mine enemies." Pſal. lxii. 5, 6, 7. "My ſoul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my ſalvation; he is my defence; I ſhall not be moved. In God is my ſalvation and my glory; the rock of my ſtrength, and my refuge is in God." Pſal. cxlvi. 5, 6. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the ſea and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for ever."

My brethren, this truſt and dependance on God is a very conſiderable part of the reſt and comfort of

the believer's ſoul. He is, on all hands, ſurrounded with enemies, liable to ſuffering, expoſed to temptations. The more he knoweth of himſelf, the more he feels his own inherent weakneſs and inſufficiency. But, in God, he ſees full and adequate proviſion for all his wants, Pſal. xxxiv. 22. "The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate."

This truſt is alſo in a particular manner generated by remembering the paſt goodneſs, or by a ſenſe of the recent mercy of God. We have daily experience of our own weakneſs and unſteadineſs in this reſpect. When our hopes are in any meaſure diſappointed, when calamities threaten, when afflictions viſit us, we are ready to yield to the dark ſuggeſtions of fear and deſpondence; but when we contemplate the great goodneſs of God on former occaſions, or when we have met with any ſingular manifeſtation of his grace and favour, it ſerves to ſtrengthen our confidence, and often, indeed, to cover us with ſhame for our unbelief and diſtruſt. On the whole, then, a believer who imitates the Pſalmiſt in this expreſſion, *Return into thy reſt, O my ſoul*, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, "Thou haſt taſted, O my ſoul, of the loving kindneſs of God! he hath brought thee out of deep waters; he hath calmed thy fears; he hath ſet thy feet upon a rock; he hath eſtabliſhed thy goings: Bluſh, bluſh! when thou conſidereſt how eaſily thy confidence was ſhaken; how prone thou waſt to ſink under affliction; and, upon every new trial, to doubt his power, and diſtruſt his promiſe. But, now, return unto thy reſt; lay aſide thy fears, which have ſo unhappy an influence both

on thy progreſs and comfort. Commit thy ways to him, and he will bring thy deſires to paſs."

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid: And,

1ſt, From what hath been ſaid, you may obſerve one great branch of the ſinfulneſs of the world in general; forgetfulneſs of God, and unthankfulneſs for his mercies. How little ſenſe of the divine goodneſs is in the hearts of men? how formal, cold, and frozen their language in praiſe? how languid their endeavours to ſerve him, from whoſe indulgent hand every bleſſing they enjoy flows? One would think that here might be ſome hold even of worldly men, who have not wholly extinguiſhed the light of natural conſcience. The greateſt part of this diſcourſe has been directed to thoſe of another character. Suffer me, now, to ſpeak a little immediately to them. You are not inſenſible to worldly comforts; on the contrary, you love them too ardently; you ſeek them too eagerly; you indulge them too liberally. Conſider, I beſeech you, who it is that beſtowed them; who it is, that, when he pleaſeth, can blaſt them to you, or withdraw them from you. O the blindneſs and infatuation of mortal men! How paſſing and tranſitory are all created comforts! how certain and ſpeedy the approach of death and judgment! Think what return you have made for all the goodneſs of God toward you from the womb even till now. And let me beg every hearer to recollect how far he ſtands indebted to God for continued health, for plentiful proviſion, for remarkable deliverances, for early inſtruction, for providential warn-

ings. And if God, by his Spirit, has raiſed convictions in your minds, or earneſtly pleaded with you in his goſpel, in what a terrifying light will all this deſpiſed goodneſs appear, when you come to the brink of that gulf which ſeparates you from an eternal world, but, above all, when you appear before God in an unembodied ſtate? It is my duty to ſet this before you with plainneſs and fidelity; it is your preſent privilege, that you hear the things that belong to your everlaſting peace. May God himſelf write them upon your hearts, and conſtrain you to flee, by faith, to the blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

2*dly*, Let me alſo beſeech every ſerious perſon, who now hears me, to conſider how far he hath ſinned againſt God and his own comfort, by forgetting the goodneſs of God, both in common and ſpecial mercies. It is ſurpriſing to think how little we make conſcience of this duty, and even when it is remembered in ſome meaſure, in what a lifeleſs, heartleſs manner it is performed. How little proportion is there between the prayers of diſtreſs, and the ſongs of deliverance? how little ſenſe upon our minds of the many gracious interpoſitions of divine providence in our favour? If he hath invited us to communion with himſelf; if he hath brought us into the ſecret chambers, and made his banner over us to be love, how ſoon is it forgotten? how little deſire of its continuance? what faint endeavours to recover it? how little concern to improve it? Strange, indeed, that ſome, after taſting of the heavenly manna, ſhould feel ſo unſeemly a longing after the fleſh-pots of Egypt.

But do you not ſin as much againſt intereſt and comfort as your duty? To forget a mercy, is to loſe it; to give thanks for it, is to preſerve and to increaſe it. It is a very common miſtake for ſerious perſons to ſit brooding over their ſorrows, and, by that means, at once to increaſe their ſufferings, and to prevent their deliverance. I do not know a more uſeful direction to melancholy or dejected Chriſtians, than by a deliberate effort of mind, from a ſenſe of duty, to recollect and give praiſe to God for the many mercies which he hath beſtowed on them. This may be a happy mean of ſilencing their complaints, of turning the tide of their affections, and giving them "beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs." Is not thankfulneſs the improvement of mercies? and hath not God ſaid, to him that "hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundantly; and from him that hath not ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeemeth to have?"

3*dly*, I ſhall conclude, with offering the three following directions to thoſe who are truly ſenſible of the goodneſs of God.

1. Be circumſpect and watchful; though a thankful frame of ſpirit is of great advantage, both for your ſanctification and peace, yet it is not out of the reach of temptation; let it not produce pride, ſecurity, or ſelf-ſufficiency. It is an excellent direction given by the Pſalmiſt to men in high ſtation and proſperity, Pſal. ii. 11. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Take heed alſo, leſt it degenerate into carnal and ſenſual joy, making you reſt with complacency in the creature, inſtead

of being led by it to place your delight and happineſs in the unchangeable Creator.

2. Be public-ſpirited and uſeful; if the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, commend his ſervice, and ſpeak to his praiſe. This was often the reſolution and practice of the Pſalmiſt David, Pſalm lxvi. 16. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my ſoul." Pſal. cxlv. 5, 6, 7. I will ſpeak of the glorious honour of thy majeſty, and of thy wondrous works; and men ſhall ſpeak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatneſs. They ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs." Let me recommend this particularly to Chriſtians of age and experience. It gives religion a very diſcouraging aſpect to younger perſons, when ſuch have nothing to utter but complaints. On the contrary, where can we behold a more edifying ſight, than an aged perſon ready to bear teſtimony to the peace and comfort of true religion, dying by neceſſity to the pleaſures and gaieties of time, but living above them on the earneſt of his future inheritance; and inſtead of a fretful ſpirit ariſing from the frailties of a tottering frame, preſerving a cheerfulneſs and ſerenity of mind, in the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection.—I imagine I hear ſome ſay, nothing is more true; but, alas! I am not the perſon: I ſee nothing in me but cauſes of complaint, or grounds of fear. I believe it is ſo with all; but you have miſtaken or perverted the meaning of the exhortation. I did not adviſe you to boaſt of yourſelf, but to ſpeak to the praiſe of God. I believe it is good, in moſt caſes, to reſiſt deſpond-

ing fears, as ſo many temptations, and ſend them away as hinderers of your duty, without a reply. Or, may I not juſtly ſay, admitting the truth of all that you can advance againſt yourſelves, is it not but ſo much the more reaſonable, that you ſhould ſay, with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. "I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, and of all the truth, that thou haſt ſhewed unto thy ſervant."

3. Be frequent and diligent in ſecret prayer. This is the way to preſerve your watchfulneſs, and to increaſe your uſefulneſs. The more you converſe with God in ſecret, you will ſpeak with the more judgment and profit to men in public. This is the way to diſpoſe of your complaints. What ſignifies repeating them to men, who may deſpiſe you, and at beſt, can only pity you, when you may carry them to God who can effectually help you? Speak as much ill of yourſelves to him as you pleaſe; but be ſo juſt as to ſpeak honourably of him and his ſervice, to others who converſe with you.—Now, may the Lord ſupply all your wants, from his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus. May he give you the ſanctified uſe of every ſtep of his providence, whether of mercy or of trial. "May the God of peace, (Heb. xiii. 20, 21.) that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON VII.

A VIEW OF THE GLORY OF GOD HUMBLING TO THE SOUL.

Job xliii. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.

My brethren, we can have no experimental knowledge, and indeed we have not much diſtinct knowledge at all of the nature of religion as it takes place among angels, and other intelligent beings who have kept their firſt eſtate, and never were polluted by ſin. From ſome things however recorded in ſcripture, we have reaſon to believe, that they appear before God with the greateſt lowlineſs and ſelf-abaſement, that they are at all times deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the infinite diſproportion between themſelves as derived, dependent, limited, imperfect beings, and the eternal, immutable, omnipotent Jehovah. Thus, in the viſion of Iſaiah, in the ſixth chapter of that book, ver. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I ſaw the Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it ſtood the ſeraphims;

each one had ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory." But, if this is the eaſe with theſe exalted and happy ſpirits, how much more muſt a deep humiliation of mind be neceſſary to us, who, by ſin, have rendered ourſelves the juſt objects of divine wrath, and whoſe hope of ſalvation is founded only on the riches of divine grace? We ought never to forget, that every inſtance of the favour of God to man, is not to be conſidered as the exerciſe of goodneſs to the worthy, nay, not merely as bounty to the needy, or help to the miſerable, but mercy to the guilty.

For this reaſon, as repentance is neceſſary to every ſinner, in order to his reconciliation with God, ſo thoſe Chriſtians preſerve the juſteſt views of their preſent ſtate and character, as well as the foundation of their hope, who frequently renew this ſalutary exerciſe. I cannot help ſaying further, that thoſe make the wiſeſt proviſion for the preſervation of their inward peace, who frequently water that tender plant with the tears of penitential ſorrow. To aſſiſt you in this exerciſe, and to point out the proper grounds of it, I have choſen to inſiſt a little on theſe words, in which you ſee the effect which a diſcovery of the glory and majeſty of God had upon his ſervant Job: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

It is not neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe, to enter at into the diſpute between Job and his friends, al-

though, no doubt, the words of the text have an evident relation to it. The controverſy ſeems plainly to have turned upon this point. His friends finding him in deep diſtreſs, under the moſt complicated affliction, would needs have it, that no good man could be ſo frowned upon by a righteous God; and therefore that his former profeſſion muſt have been hypocritical and falſe. This is evident from the manner in which Eliphaz opens the charge againſt him. chap. iv. 6, 7, 8, 9. "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightneſs of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee, who ever periſhed, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have ſeen, they that plow iniquity, and ſow wickedneſs, reap the ſame. By the blaſt of God they periſh, and by the breath of his noſtrils are they conſumed." In oppoſition to this, Job aſſerts and maintains his integrity in general, and, withal, affirms their opinion to be falſe; for that God, in his juſt and ſovereign providence, brings affliction both on the righteous and the wicked. That this is the propoſition which he all along endeavours to ſupport, is plain, as from many other paſſages, ſo particularly from chap. ix. 22. "This is one thing, therefore I ſaid it, he deſtroyeth the perfect, and the wicked."

Thus ſtood the matter in diſpute, between Job and his friends, in which, though that good man had ſupported the truth on the ſubject of divine providence; yet in the heat of the debate, and the anguiſh of his own ſufferings, he had let fall ſome expreſſions, not only of impatience, but of diſreſpect to the conduct of the Lord his Maker. For theſe

he was firſt reproved by Elihu, and afterwards, with unſpeakable force and majeſty, by God himſelf, who aſſerts the dignity of his power, and the righteouſneſs of his providence. On this diſcovery of the glory of divine perfection, the ſufferer was deeply humbled, and expreſſes a ſenſe of his own vileneſs and folly, in the 4th and 5th verſes of the fortieth chapter: "Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And again, in the beginning of the forty-ſecond chapter, concluding with the words of the text.

It is not improbable, from the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter, that it pleaſed God to give Job ſome viſible repreſentation of his glory and omnipotence. This was not unuſual in ancient times, before the canon of the ſcripture was cloſed. But, no doubt, the diſcovery which chiefly affected him was inward and ſpiritual, carrying home with irreſiſtible force, the great truths which we ſtill find recorded in a manner inimitably noble and ſublime. *I have heard of thee*, ſays he, *by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* This implies, that, as ſeeing gives a more diſtinct, full, and ſatisfying knowledge of any thing, than hearing of it only by the report of others, the impreſſions which he then had of the majeſty and glory of God, were far ſtronger than any he had ever felt before.—*Therefore*, ſays he, *I abhor myſelf.* It filled him with ſelf-loathing and abhorrence.—*And I repent in duſt and aſhes.* This is either, in general, a ſtrong expreſſion of deep penitence and ſorrow, of which duſt and aſhes were

anciently the ſigns; or, perhaps, it has a particular reference to his preſent miſerable and afflicted ſtate, deſcribed in chap. ii. 8. "And he took him a potſherd to ſcrape himſelf withal; and he ſat down among the aſhes." As if he had ſaid, Lord, I am deeply ſenſible of the evil of every raſh word, of every rebellious thought. I confeſs, that thou haſt afflicted me in truth and faithfulneſs; and that, in this low and deſolate condition, it becomes me to lay my hand upon my mouth, and to repent of that guilt which would have fully juſtified thy providence in a ſtill heavier ſtroke.

The words thus explained, preſent to us this general and moſt important truth, That a diſcovery of the perfection, glory, and majeſty of God, has a powerful influence in leading us to repentance; and that the clearer this diſcovery is, the more ſincere will be our repentance, and the deeper our humiliation. In diſcourſing farther on this ſubject at preſent, I propoſe only, through divine aſſiſtance,

I. To make ſome obſervations, at once to illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition above laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. And, in the

II. And laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what ſhall be ſaid.

I. Then, I am to make ſome obſervations, at once to explain and confirm the propoſition juſt now laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. But, before we enter on what is principally

intended, I muſt intreat your attention to the following preliminary remarks:

1. That this truth will hold equally certain in whatever way the diſcovery is made. It may pleaſe God to manifeſt himſelf to his people in very different ways. Sometimes it may be in a way wholly, or in part, miraculous, as in the caſe of Job, Iſaiah, and ſome others mentioned in ſcripture; ſometimes by affecting diſpenſations of providence; ſometimes by his ordinances, or inſtituted worſhip, accompanied with the operation of his Spirit; and ſometimes by this laſt alone, without the help or acceſſion of any outward mean.

2. I hope it will not be thought improper, that, in reaſoning on the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I ſometimes bring in view the additional manifeſtations given us in the goſpel of the divine glory. This, to be ſure, could not be ſuppoſed to make a part of what was diſcovered to Job, to whom that myſtery, hid from ages and generations, and only opened in the fulneſs of time, was very obſcurely, if at all known. But the example afforded us in the text, leads us to a general truth; in the illuſtration and application of which, we may make uſe of all that is known to us of the nature and government of God. The

3. And principal remark is, that, when I ſpeak of the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I mean an internal and ſpiritual diſcovery, and not ſuch a knowledge as is merely ſpeculative, and reſts in the underſtanding, without deſcending into the heart. There is a common diſtinction to be met with in almoſt every practical writer, between know-

ledge merely ſpeculative, that ſwims in the head, and practical or ſaving knowledge, that dwells in and governs the heart. That there is ſuch a diſtinction in fact, experience obliges every man to confeſs: but it is extremly difficult to ſpeak in a clear and preciſe manner upon it; to tell wherein it conſiſts; or to ſhew how theſe two ſorts of knowledge differ otherwiſe, than by their effects. Yet even to point out their radical difference, ſeems neceſſary to me, who propoſe to ſhew the happy influence and powerful efficacy of this knowledge, when it is of the right kind.

For this purpoſe, my brethren, be pleaſed to obſerve, that a barren ſpeculative knowledge of God, is that which fixes chiefly on his natural perfections; or if it be ſuppoſed to take in ſuch as are moral, it is only to reaſon upon them as an object of ſcience; but the true knowledge of God, is an inward and ſpiritual diſcovery of the amiableneſs and excellence of his moral perfections; or, to ſpeak more in the ſcripture ſtyle, to perceive that he is indeed "glorious in his holineſs. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts." This is the language of celeſtial adoration, of thoſe who "ſee him as he is, and know even as they are known." The ſame, in ſome meaſure, is the view given to every real child of God on earth, and alone ſerves to diſtinguiſh his children of every rank, and every degree of capacity, from others of an oppoſite character. Let me ſuppoſe a poor Chriſtian weak in underſtanding, and unaſſiſted by education, who is witneſs to any extraordinary act of divine power: for example, a thunder ſtorm, ſeeming to rend the heavens aſunder, and

either laying ſome ancient and venerable pile in aſhes, or perhaps, ſtriking ſome perſons to death, in a manner ſwifter than thought; he is immediately affected with a ſenſe of the ſovereignty of the Lord of nature, the holineſs of every part of his will, the duty of abſolute ſubjection in the creature, and the ſinfulneſs of every rebellious thought. But, above all, he is ſtruck with a ſenſe of the malignity of ſin, which has introduced ſo may natural evils, and, as it were, armed the elements in their Maker's cauſe. Such a perſon, though he can expreſs his thoughts but very poorly, nay, though he can hardly ſpeak to others with coherence or conſiſtency, ſees much more of God, than he who can reaſon on the planetary ſyſtem; who can trace the beauty, variety, and extent of the Creator's works, and thence infer the neceſſity of a ſelf-exiſtent, almighty, and intelligent firſt cauſe. The one may expatiate on the wonderful works, or the wiſe purpoſes of the Author of nature; the other feels and confeſſes him to be God. Alas! my brethren, we ſee too often, that knowledge and holineſs in us, do not bear proportion one to another. We ſee every day examples of the greateſt intellectual abilities, the nobleſt natural talents, being abuſed to the worſt of purpoſes; for ſuch I muſt always reckon, their ſerving no higher end than to adorn and ſet off the poſſeſſor, or burn incenſe to human vanity.——By a diſcovery, then, of the perfections, majeſty, and glory of God, I underſtand the glory of his infinite holineſs; that holineſs which is inſeparable from his nature, which ſhines in all his works, and in all his ways.

Theſe obſervations being premiſed, let us now

conſider what influence a diſcovery of the glory of God hath in producing repentance, and increaſing humility. And, in the

1ſt Place, It hath this effect, as it tends to convince us of ſin, and, particularly to bring to light theſe innumerable evils, which a deceitful heart often, in a great meaſure, hides from its own view. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God, which diſcovers and expoſes the works of darkneſs. That a view of the divine Majeſty has a ſtrong tendency to give us a deep ſenſe of our own ſinfulneſs, is plain from many ſcripture examples. That of Job, in our text, is one directly in point. Another you have in Iſaiah, chap. vi. 5. where the reflection of the prophet, on a view of the divine glory, is, "Wo is me! for I am undone; becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts." Another inſtance you may ſee in the apoſtle John, who, upon a view of the Redeemer in his glory, was, in a manner, deprived of life, through exceſſive fear. Rev. i. 17. "And when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as dead." The only other inſtance I mention is of the apoſtle Peter, who, on the unexpected appearance, or rather from a view of the power of Chriſt, manifeſted in a miracle, was immediately ſtruck with a ſenſe of guilt, Luke v. 8. "When Simon Peter ſaw it, he fell down at Jeſus' knees, ſaying, Depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord."

It is not difficult to explain how a view of the divine holineſs tends to diſcover and to affect us with

a ſenſe of our ſinfulneſs. Nothing makes any quality appear ſo ſenſibly as a compariſon with its oppoſite. The application of a ſtraight rule marks the obliquity of a crooked line; nay, it marks even the leaſt degree of variation, which by a leſs accurate trial would not have been diſcovered. Any piece of deformity appears more hideous and ſhocking when compared with perfect beauty. For the ſame reaſon, a clear view of the holineſs of God, and a ſenſe of his intimate preſence with us, tends to bring ſin to remembrance, as well as to confuſion for thoſe ſins, which before we were able to juſtify, palliate, or conceal. We are expreſsly aſſured that our firſt parents immediately after eating the forbidden fruit, were ſenſible of their guilt, and I cannot think they were wholly inſenſible of the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God. Yet we find that their fear greatly increaſed (doubtleſs from a ſenſe of ſin) when they heard God's voice in the garden, Gen. iii. 8. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themſelves from the preſence of the Lord God amongſt the trees of the garden."

You may take a very plain and ſimple illuſtration of this from daily experience. Are there not ſome perſons of looſe principles and irregular practice, who, when by themſelves, or in ſociety like themſelves, juſtify many of their ſins, and to all appearance, commit them without remorſe, as innocent, if not laudable? but let the ſame perſons be carried into ſober company, eſpecially into the preſence of any perſon eminent for piety and gravity,

and they will be reſtrained and aſhamed, and not able to open their mouths in defence of their licentious carriage. The mere preſence of ſuch a perſon carries inſtant irreſiſtible conviction with it, by forcing a compariſon between piety and profanity; that is to ſay, good and evil, light and darkneſs. So certain a truth is this, that one of the ancient heathen authors gives it as a rule for moral conduct, "that men ſhould always imagine themſelves in the preſence of ſuch a man as Cato, renowned for gravity and virtue." But if the fancied preſence of a mortal, in whom ſome faint rays, if I may ſpeak ſo, of the divine image appear by reflection, has ſo much influence, how much greater would be the effect of a firm perſuaſion of the real preſence of a holy God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity!" What is it elſe than this that makes wicked men flee the ſociety of the good as painful, and ſhun the thoughts of God as intolerable; ſo that it is the ſcripture character of ſuch, that they ſay unto their Maker practically, "Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways."

2. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the evil of ſin, the aggravations of particular ſins, and to take away the excuſes of the ſinner. Let us remember what I obſerved in a preceding part of this diſcourſe, that it muſt be a diſcovery of the glory of the divine holineſs: not only a knowledge of the true God, and underſtanding what he is, but a view of his infinite glory and beauty in being ſuch. It muſt neceſſarily ſet the evil of ſin in the cleareſt light, that all ſin, as ſuch, ſtrikes immediately at the very being and perfections of God. When the

law of God ſhews us our ſins, we may be ready to complain of its ſtrictneſs and ſeverity, and wiſh to ſlip our necks from under the yoke. But when we ſee that the law could not be otherwiſe than it is, without being faulty; when we ſee that it is nothing elſe but a fair tranſcript of the moral perfections of God; and when we look up to the great and bright original, it muſt convince us that all ſin is a direct oppoſition to the nature, as well as a rebellion againſt the will of God. If he is infinitely perfect and glorious, ſin muſt be infinitely hateful and abominable. No man can plead for ſin, in any inſtance or in any degree, but he muſt blaſpheme the nature and perfections of God, to which it ſtands in oppoſition.

All men, indeed, by nature, are enemies to God himſelf in their minds by wicked works; and they hate his law, becauſe it is ſpiritual and pure. There are alſo too many in this age, who have very relaxed principles as to the extent and obligation of the law, and of conſequence, very ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin. But a view of the glory of God rectifies at once theſe fatal errors, and carries home ſuch conviction of the rights of the Creator, the obligation and ſubjection of the creature, and the beauty and excellence of that image which was ſtained by ſin, as forces us to adopt the language of the Holy Ghoſt: "How evil and how bitter a thing is it to depart from the living God!" God grant that there may be many in this aſſembly, who underſtand and feel the force of this truth! There is need, my brethren, to attend to it; for all convictions of ſin, which do not proceed from this ſource,

or do not neceſſarily include this view, whatever pain or terror they may occaſion, will prove empty and fruitleſs at laſt. Though there may be a ſlaviſh fear of the power of God, unleſs there be a view of the infinite evil of ſin, there cannot be any laſting and ſaving change.

The ſame view alſo points out the aggravation of particular ſins. The more clearly we underſtand the nature of God, our relation to, and dependance upon him, the more will we perceive the aggravation of every ſin which burſts aſunder theſe bonds. A view of the glory of God muſt either be general, or particular; or perhaps, for the moſt part, there is a mixture of both. My meaning is, that when there is a diſcovery of the glory of God in general, there is often at the ſame time, a peculiar and ſtriking diſplay of ſome one attribute, of power, wiſdom, juſtice, or mercy. Now, how ſtrongly does this impreſs upon the mind, a ſenſe of the evil of thoſe ſins which ſtrike directly againſt that perfection which happens to be ſet in the ſtrongeſt point of view! When any diſplay is given of the omniſcience of God, how does it make us ſenſible of the impiety and folly of ſecret ſins! Dan. ii. 47. "The king anſwered unto Daniel, and ſaid, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of ſecrets, ſeeing thou couldeſt reveal this ſecret." When the power of God is made manifeſt, how does it aggravate the guilt of preſumption and confidence! Iſa. xlv. 9. "Wo unto him that ſtriveth with his Maker: let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of the earth.

Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it, what makeſt thou? or thy work, he hath no hands?

When the wiſdom of God is diſplayed, doth not then all diſtruſt appear highly criminal? Ought we not to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light, and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?" When we have a view of our abſolute dependance upon, and unſpeakable obligations to the divine bounty, what a ſenſe does this give us of the ſin of unthankfulneſs, and forgetfulneſs of God! Of how many unhappy ſenſualiſts may this complaint be made! Iſa. i. 2, 3. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath ſpoken, I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib: but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider." Without any further enumeration, it will appear undeniable, that the clearer the diſcovery of the glory of God, the more muſt not only the evil of ſin in general appear, but every particular crime muſt be loaded with new aggravations. I cannot help mentioning here, in a few words, that this is the immediate effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in Jeſus Chriſt. The unmerited, unparalleled love, manifeſted to ſinners in the goſpel, greatly aggravates their ingratitude and rebellion. And the more that believers reflect upon their own conduct, and compare it with the grace and condeſcenſion of their Redeemer, the more they muſt *abhor themſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

I only add on this head, that a diſcovery of the

glory of God takes away the excuſes of the ſinner. How prone men are to excuſe and palliate their ſins, we all know by experience. It is a light ſenſe of the evil of ſin, that leads us to commit it; and there is no reaſon to be ſurpriſed, if this, joined with ſelf-intereſt, makes us ingenious in forming an apology for it after the commiſſion. Hence often ariſe hard thoughts of the threatenings of God againſt ſin as ſevere. Hence alſo unbelieving thoughts, which will not admit that ever he will fulfil his word, or execute the threatened judgment. But a diſcovery of the glory of God, particularly of his infinite holineſs, by ſhewing the evil of ſin in its proper colours, ſtops every mouth, drags the ſinner into the preſence of his Judge, and ſtrips the guilty criminal of every vain plea. We ſee plainly, in the caſe of Job, that he had ſuch a view of the power, dominion, and abſolute ſovereignty of God, as put him entirely to ſilence, and convinced him, that there was no room for contending; no place for compariſon between ſo unequal (muſt I call them) parties, God and man, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile; what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

This right of ſovereignty in God, and the duty of abſolute, immediate, unconditional ſubjection in the creature, I find plainly and frequently eſtabliſhed in ſcripture. It is indeed entirely in this ſtyle, which may well be called the ſtyle of the King of kings, that God ſpeaks to Job in the four chapters preceding that where my text lies. Though he is brought in ſpeaking to reſolve a difficulty in providence; yet, you may obſerve, he does not ſay one word as

to the juſtice of his proceeding; but, under many of the ſtrongeſt images, ſets forth his irreſiſtible power, chap. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. "Who is this that darkeneth counſel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and anſwer thou me. Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou haſt underſtanding. Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, if thou knoweſt? or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? or who laid the corner ſtone thereof?" And, again, chap. xl. 8, 9, 10, 11. "Wilt thou alſo diſannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayeſt be righteous? Haſt thou an arm like God? or canſt thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyſelf now with majeſty and excellency, and array thyſelf with glory and beauty. Caſt abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abaſe him."

The ſovereignty of God, is what of all things elſe, ſinners, while they continue in that character, are leaſt capable of underſtanding, and leaſt willing to ſubmit to. This is not to be wondered at, becauſe the very nature of ſin conſiſts in caſting off our allegiance, and as far as in us lies, rejecting the authority of God. But, my brethren, a real diſcovery of his glory, at once raiſes him to the throne, and humbles us at his footſtool, and is as if we heard a voice from heaven, addreſſed to us in the following ſtriking words, Iſa. ii. 10, 11. "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majeſty. The lofty looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs

of men ſhall be bowed down; and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that day." One who hath ſo known God, will perceive, that there can be no more proper reply to objections on the part of man, to the divine procedure, than that of the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix 20. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God?"

3. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the danger of ſin. It is the hope of impunity that emboldens the ſinner to tranſgreſs, and to perſiſt in his tranſgreſſions. For this reaſon, we find the ſcriptures in general attributing the impenitence of ſinners to theſe two great ſources, ignorance and unbelief, Pſal. xiv. 1. "The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God." And, in ver. 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" that is to ſay, ſuch bold rebellion in their conduct plainly diſcovers the atheiſm of their hearts. To the ſame purpoſe, Pſal. x. 11, 13. "He hath ſaid in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never ſee it.—Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath ſaid in his heart, thou wilt not require it." But a diſcovery of the divine glory, at once deſtroys the foundation of this ſtupid ſecurity and impious preſumption. It realizes the very being of God more than before, as is plainly implied in the words of Job: *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* It makes his preſence ſenſible, and teaches us, that "all things are naked before him." So that there is no hope of lying concealed. It ſets before us his holineſs and juſtice; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. So that, while his nature con-

tinues the ſame, the guilty and impenitent cannot poſſibly obtain pardon. Above all, it ſets before us the terror of his power, which is infinite and boundleſs; ſo that nothing can be more vain, than for the ſinner to hope either to eſcape or reſiſt.

Agreeably to all this we find, that in the holy ſcriptures, in which God hath been pleaſed to make himſelf known to us by external revelation, it is by aſſerting, and as it were diſplaying and producing to view, the glory of his infinite perfection, that he endeavours to deter us from ſin, and animate or encourage us to duty. When God gave the law to the children of Iſrael, he gave them, at the ſame time, a diſplay of his greatneſs and majeſty in a very awful manner. To expreſs his ſovereign authority, and the abſolute propriety he had in them, he introduces it with theſe words: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage." You may alſo remember, how often, in appointing the ſeveral Moſaic conſtitutions, theſe ſignificative words are repeated, *I am the Lord.* In the ſame manner, to impreſs his people with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as committed againſt ſuch a God, he declares his own abſolute dominion, Mal. i. 14. "But curſed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and ſacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

When he would give his people a deep conviction of the folly and danger of ſecret ſins, he ſets forth his omniſcience and omnipreſence, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar

off? Can any hide himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the Lord." When he would expreſs the danger of obſtinacy and diſobedience, he gives a very lively idea of his infinite power, Jer. v. 22. "Fear ye not me? ſaith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my preſence, which have placed the ſand for the bound of the ſea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot paſs it; and though the waves thereof toſs themſelves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not paſs over it?" The very ſame thing he doth to encourage the truſt of his own people, Iſa. xliv. 6. "Thus ſaith the Lord, the King of Iſrael, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hoſts, I am the firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God." When he would make us ſenſible, that if we continue in ſin, it is impoſſible for us to eſcape puniſhment, what a terrible repreſentation does he give of his dreadful and irreſiſtible vengeance! Prophecies of Nah. i. 5, 6. "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his preſence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can ſtand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceneſs of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

Thus we ſee, that God in ſcripture reveals the glory of his own nature, as the effectual means of reſtraining us in the commiſſion of ſin, or turning us from it; and plainly ſuppoſes, that nothing but ignorance of him can encourage ſinners in their rebellion. Neither can it be denied, that when there is an inward and powerful diſcovery of theſe truths

to the mind, it muſt lead us to repentance, and lay us proſtrate before his throne, in obedience and ſubmiſſion. Who, that knoweth the Almighty, will run upon the thick boſſes of his buckler? or will not rather uſe this dutiful language of Job, chap. ix. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. "I know it is ſo of a truth; but how ſhould man be juſt with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot anſwer him one of a thouſand. He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength: who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered? which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger; which ſhaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble."

4. In the laſt place, a view of the divine glory tends to lead us to repentance, as it ſets forth his infinite mercy, and affords encouragement to, as well as points out the profit of repentance. Juſt and proper conceptions of God cannot be given us, without including his great mercy. This bright perfection ſhone, even on Mount Sinai, through all the terrors of that legal diſpenſation, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. "And he ſaid, I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory. And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs to paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I will ſhew mercy." Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. "And the Lord deſcended in the cloud, and ſtood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs

and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and ſin." Without the knowledge of this amiable attribute, all the other perfections of God would ſignify little to bring us to true repentance. Without this, they carry nothing in them but unmixed terror to the guilty. Without this, therefore, the conſideration of his infinite holineſs and purity, his inflexible juſtice, and almighty power, would only ſerve to drive us farther from him, by throwing us into abſolute deſpair. But when, to all the other perfections of God, we join his infinite mercy, the true knowledge of him ſerves not only to deſtroy criminal preſumption, but to animate to dutiful ſubmiſſion. Thus the Pſalmiſt expreſſes himſelf, Pſal. cxxx. 3, 4. "If thou Lord, ſhouldeſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand? But there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared." Here you may obſerve, that when he ſays, "there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared," he not only means, that there is encouragement to ſerve God, but that his mercy itſelf leads to that filial reverence which is ſo eſſential a part of true penitence. The greatneſs and mercy of God happily conſpire in melting the heart of the ſinner. There is an expreſſion of ſingular beauty, Hoſ. iii. 5. "Afterward ſhall the children of Iſrael return, and ſeek the Lord their God, and David their King: and ſhall fear the Lord, and his goodneſs, in the latter days."

This leads me to obſerve, that it is in the goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, that we have the brighteſt and cleareſt diſplay of divine mercy. It is in Chriſt, that we have the true and ſaving diſ-

covery of the glory and perfections of God. And it is particularly in him, that we have an united illuſtration, and joint diſplay of greatneſs and goodneſs, of majeſty and mercy. In the undertaking of our bleſſed Redeemer, we have a very clear and affecting view of thoſe perfections, that ſhew the evil of ſin, and the danger of the ſinner. Never did the holineſs of God ſhine brighter, or his hatred and indignation againſt ſin, appear with greater terror, than when the ſword of his juſtice was drawn out againſt *the man who is his fellow.* When God ſwept away a polluted world by an univerſal deluge; when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimſtone from heaven; when the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; theſe were terrible proofs of his hatred of ſin, of the juſtice and holineſs of his nature. Yet were they, after all, but faint evidences, in compariſon of what were given, when "he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—was found in faſhion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs."

But, at the ſame time, in this great event, hath he not magnified his love? Rom. v. 8. "But God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us." How ſhall we think or ſpeak on this unfathomable ſubject! Chriſt Jeſus is the fruit of the Father's everlaſting love to ſinners of mankind. How great the giver! how unſpeakable the gift! how mean and worthleſs the objects of his love! God is love. Power, wiſdom, holineſs, and juſtice, ſhine, indeed, in the

doctrine of the croſs. But, above all, grace and mercy prevail "and reign through righteouſneſs unto eternal life." What a melting view to every convinced ſinner! Zech. xii. 10. "They ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt-born." Muſt they not, with Job, *abhor themſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes?* This is a circumſtance frequently taken notice of with regard to the goſpel converts, Jer. xxxi. 9. "They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplications will I lead them." Jer. l. 4, 5. "In thoſe days, and in that time, ſaith the Lord, the children of Iſrael ſhall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they ſhall go and ſeek the Lord their God. They ſhall aſk the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, ſaying, Come, and let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that ſhall not be forgotten." I ſhall cloſe this head, by addreſſing to you the words of God to the children of Iſrael, Joel ii. 12, 13. "Therefore alſo now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil."

I proceed, now, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. You may learn, from this ſubject, the force

and meaning of thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, in which the whole of religion is expreſſed by the knowledge of God. Thus, Prov. ix. 10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom; and the knowledge of the holy is underſtanding." The ſame thing is affirmed by our bleſſed Saviour, John xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent." On the other hand, wicked men are often deſcribed by this ſhort and expreſſive character, that they know not God, as in 2 Theſſ. i. 8. "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." The truth is, God is either wholly unknown, or greatly miſtaken by wicked men. None but his ſervants do truly ſee his glory; and the more they ſee of him, the more they are aſſimilated to him. Thus the apoſtle Paul deſcribes converſion in the following terms, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "For God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt." And, in the ſame epiſtle, chap. iii. 18. he thus deſcribes the progreſs of the Chriſtian life, "But we all with open face beholding, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may learn the great danger of a ſtate of ignorance. If repentance, which is the beginning of true religion, takes its riſe from a knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, does it not follow, that thoſe who are groſsly ignorant, are not only in a

contemptible, but in a deplorable ſtate? that they muſt be ſtrangers to the power and practice of religion, and dying in that condition, muſt periſh eternally? It is much to be lamented, that even amongſt us, who have the means of inſtruction in ſo great plenty, there are ſtill many who continue groſsly ignorant. How inexcuſable are thoſe parents, who do not make conſcience of diligently training up their children in the knowledge of the things that belong to their eternal peace? I muſt alſo intreat all heads of families, whom God hath enabled to hire the labour of others, ſeriouſly to think of the obligation that lies upon them, to inſtruct their ſervants in the principles of religion, and not ſuffer any under their roof to periſh for lack of knowledge. Do not think you have done enough, when you have given them food and wages, if you wholly neglect their precious ſouls. I do not expect to prevail upon you, faithfully to diſcharge this duty, by any arguments but thoſe drawn from the glory of God, and your own everlaſting intereſt; but I cannot help, at the ſame time, putting you in mind, that it is very much for your temporal intereſt. Depend upon it, the more conſcientiouſly you diſcharge your duty to them, the more honeſtly, diligently, and cheerfully will they ſerve you. It is very common to hear complaints of the ſlothfulneſs, unfaithfulneſs, and inſolence of ſervants; but, if we conſider ſeriouſly what belongs to the duty of a maſter, there will be found, perhaps, as many, and as great faults on this ſide as on the other. It is ſurpriſing that ſome ſeem to expect in a poor uneducated creature, all manner of decency of behaviour, ſweetneſs of temper, inte-

grity and diligence, and are ready to ſtorm upon the leaſt defect, while, at the ſame time, they ſhew no example in their own conduct, but of a viſible neglect of duty both to God and man. O! my brethren, have pity on the ignorant, eſpecially the younger ſort, who would learn, if they had teachers. Ignorance is always a ſecure inſenſible ſtate. They know nothing, and therefore they fear nothing. Public inſtruction is, in a great meaſure, uſeleſs to thoſe who are not prepared for it by more familiar teaching at home. Let miniſters ſpeak never ſo plainly from the pulpit, it is ſtill to many of them a ſtrange language, which they do not comprehend.

3. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may ſee the neceſſity of regeneration, or an inward change of heart, in order to real religion. You have heard above, that it is not a ſpeculative knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, or underſtanding what he is, that leads to repentance, but a view of his excellence and amiableneſs, as glorious in his holineſs. This none can have, but thoſe who are in ſome meaſure transformed into the ſame image. Hence it is, that wicked men do not cheriſh, but avoid the thoughts of God. Hence it is, that extraordinary tokens of the divine power and preſence, ſignal judgments, and unexpected ſtrokes on themſelves or their relations, diſtreſs and terrify them, and bring them under a ſlaviſh bondage for a little, but produce no love; no deſire of union; no cordial ſubmiſſion. Hence alſo appears the fooliſhneſs of that ſinful, but general propenſity in men, to aſk after a ſign, and to deſire that other and different evidence ſhould be given them of the truth of reli-

gion than God hath ſeen meet. We have an example of this in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded Luke xvi. towards the cloſe. There the rich man is repreſented, as intreating that Lazarus might be ſent to his brethren for their warning. When Abraham refers them to the revealed will of God, Moſes and the prophets, he urges his requeſt thus, ver. 30. "And he ſaid, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent;" to which the anſwer is given immediately, "if they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead."

There have been others, at different times, who have deſired ſuch extraordinary proofs; but they would, of themſelves, be attended with no real benefit. Though you had been on Mount Sinai with Moſes, it would have produced terror, but no other effect, without a ſpiritual diſcovery of the real glory of God. See Exod. xix. 16. "And it came to paſs on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; ſo that all the people that was in the camp trembled." And the ſame book, chap. xx. 18, 19. "And all the people ſaw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noiſe of the trumpet, and the mountain ſmoking; and when the people ſaw it, they removed and ſtood afar off: and they ſaid unto Moſes, ſpeak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God ſpeak with us, leſt we die." Another evidence of the ſame thing may be taken from the caſe of devils and damned ſpirits. They

have, no doubt, a ſenſible demonſtration of the being, and probably a very clear intellectual knowledge of the nature of God; yet hath it not any effect in changing their diſpoſitions: on the contrary, the more they know of him, who is ſo oppoſite to their temper, they hate him the more; it inflames their natural enmity, and makes it rage with double violence. This, I think, appears very plainly, both from the reaſon of the thing, and from the following paſſages of ſcripture, Matth. viii. 29. it is ſaid of two demoniacks: "And behold they cried out, ſaying, What have we to do with thee, Jeſus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Mark v. 6, 7. "But when he ſaw Jeſus afar off, he ran and worſhipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and ſaid, What have I to do with thee, Jeſus, thou Son of the moſt high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." And again, Mark ix. 20. "And they brought him unto him; and when he ſaw him, ſtraightway the ſpirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming." From which paſſages, we may perceive, agreeable to what has been obſerved, that the preſence of Chriſt increaſed at once the rage and miſery of the unclean ſpirits. Let this excite us to pray that it would pleaſe God to reveal himſelf to us by his Spirit, and give us the ſaving knowledge of him, as he is "in Chriſt Jeſus reconciling the world to himſelf."

4. Suffer me on this occaſion, ſhortly to addreſs myſelf to thoſe who are ſtrangers to true religion. Let me beſeech them while they are yet in the way, and whilſt the Spirit of God is ſtriving with them

in his word and ordinances, to lay down the weapons of their rebellion againſt him, and to lay hold, by faith, on the atoning blood of Chriſt for their reconciliation and peace. Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who have yet no knowledge of God, but that which makes his ſervice a burden, his Sabbaths a wearineſs, and his people contemptible or odious? Are there not ſome tender ſpirits, who are paſſionate lovers of this preſent world, but unable to bear the view of mortality and miſery in their fellow-creatures; who tremble at the gloom of a church-yard, or burying vault, and turn pale as aſhes at the ſight of a death's head, or an open grave? I beſeech you, my beloved hearers to join with the terror of divine power, the riches of divine grace; and let both conſtrain you to "acquaint yourſelves with God, and be at peace, that thereby good may come unto you." I know no way by which you may avoid meeting with the king of terrors, but you may ſet him at defiance under the protection of the King of kings. There is no profit in forgetting, but there is both honour and profit in conquering death. Some are unhappily ſucceſsful, for a ſeaſon, in baniſhing every diſmal idea from their minds. The falſe and flattering pleaſures of life ingroſs their attention, and intoxicate their minds. But, in a little time, Behold the ſupreme Judge "cometh with clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of him." He is now beſeeching you with tenderneſs, and waiting on you with patience. Embrace, therefore, the happy ſeaſon. "Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye pe-

riſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

5. In the laſt place, you may ſee the reaſon why every truly good man, the more he groweth in religion, the more he groweth in humility. Growth in religion implies, or carries in it, a growing diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in his works, his word, his ordinances, his providence. This neceſſarily leads to ſelf-abaſement. O how contrary to religion is pride! But, above all others, how abſurd, criminal, intolerable, is ſpiritual pride? What a proof of ſelf-ignorance, as well as forgetfulneſs of God! The firſt views of a penitent are fixed on the enormities of his life; but when theſe are in ſome meaſure ſubdued, additional diſcoveries of the glory of God bring forth the latent corruptions of his heart. What affecting complaints does that eminent, zealous, faithful miniſter of Chriſt, the apoſtle Paul, make in the following well known paſſage, Rom. vii. 8. "For I know that in me (that is, in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is preſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." And ver. 23, 24. "But I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?" Nay, the cleareſt views which a believer can take of the riches of divine mercy through a Redeemer, though they afford unſpeakable conſolation in God, tend alſo deeply to humble him under a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs. The

doctrine of the croſs is not more refreſhing to the broken in heart, than it is abaſing to the proud; for it was choſen of God for this very purpoſe "that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence."

On the whole, my brethren, as you cannot live under the direction of a better habitual principle, ſo you cannot prepare for any act of ſolemn worſhip more properly, than by deep humility. To improve this diſpoſition, let me entreat you to make a ſerious and impartial ſearch into the ſins you have been guilty of, in heart and converſation, by omiſſion or commiſſion; by neglecting your duty to God, or the ill performance of his worſhip in public, in family, or in ſecret; by neglecting your duty to your neighbour, to yourſelves, to your relations; or doing that which is wrong, by indulging in any meaſure, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, or the pride of life." To conclude all, you will never have a more ſatisfying evidence, that your acts of worſhip, ordinary or more ſolemn, have been acceptable to God, than if they ſerve to clothe you with humility, and make you adopt and reliſh the words of Job in the text: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

SERMON VIII.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

REV. vii. 15.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.——

MY brethren, however great a degree of corruption prevails at preſent in the viſible church, the very profeſſion of every Chriſtian, implies a renunciation of the world, and a fixed hope of a better ſtate. His attendance upon the ordinances of God on earth, is in order to ſecure the poſſeſſion, and prepare himſelf for the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. He confeſſeth that he is a ſtranger and pilgrim in the earth; that he lives by faith and not by ſight. And, therefore, nothing can be more ſuitable to his character; nothing more conducive to his comfort, than frequent views of the employment and happineſs of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.

And, ſurely, this is a ſubject highly proper for our meditation on the evening of a communion Sabbath. In this ordinance, you have had the price paid for this glorious inheritance ſet before you, by ſymbolical repreſentation, that your faith

in, and hope of the poſſeſſion of it, might be the more confirmed. In the inſtitution itſelf, as recorded by the apoſtle Paul, you find he connects the commemoration of the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, with his ſecond appearance in glory, 1 Cor. xi. 26. "For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Nay, our Lord himſelf ſeems to have had his heart and his thoughts in heaven, when he left this memorial of his preſence on earth, as appears from Matth. xxvi 29. "But I ſay unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And, indeed, we have his own example in this firſt communion, wherein he himſelf was the adminiſtrator, for following or concluding it with a meditation on the heavenly happineſs; for, before he roſe from it, he begins his excellent conſolatory diſcourſe in this manner, John xiv. 1, 2. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe alſo in me. In my Father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you."

It is true, indeed, my brethren, our knowledge of the future glory of the ſaints, is, at preſent, extremely imperfect, and muſt be ſo, for wiſe reaſons, while we continue in the body. There are, however, ſeveral different views of it given in the word of God, highly worthy of our attention. Amongſt others, this in our text, that they are *before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple.* That theſe words are to be underſtood

of the ſaints in heaven, and not of any glorious period of the church on earth, or, if of this laſt, manifeſtly in alluſion to the former, I think is plain, both from what goes before, and what follows them, which I ſhall read in connection, as all the explication of the text that is neceſſary, from ver. 13. "And one of the elders anſwered, ſaying unto me, What are theſe which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? and I ſaid unto him, Sir thou knoweſt. And he ſaid to me, Theſe are they which come out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple;* and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them; they ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What I propoſe from this paſſage at preſent, is, through the divine aſſiſtance, to illuſtrate a little to you the happineſs of the ſaints in perpetual communion with God in his temple above; and then to make ſome improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction while you continue here below.

I. In the *firſt* place, then, I am to illuſtrate a little to you the happineſs of the ſaints in perpetual communion with God in his temple above. And here, obſerve, that though I have ſaid perpetual

communion with God, and did mean it of his immediate worſhip and ſervice, I did not intend to aſſert, that they are at no time employed in a different manner, or in work which may be called by a different name. What variety of exerciſe may be provided for their noble and vigorous faculties, in the nature or works of God, we cannot pretend to know. As the angels are called "miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter to them who are heirs of ſalvation;" ſo we know not how far he may bleſs and dignify his ſaitns, by employing them in the adminiſtration of ſome part of his extenſive dominion. But it is ſurely juſt, to call their communion with God in his worſhip perpetual, both becauſe of their frequent actual application to it, and becauſe of that conſtant adoration of ſoul which we muſt ſuppoſe will accompany either an inveſtigation of the nature and works, or an execution of the will of God. It is alſo well warranted by the expreſſion in the text, *and ſerve him day and night in his temple.* Now, in order to illuſtrate the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, we may conſider it in two different lights: Firſt, as it is *internal and ſpiritual.* Secondly, As it is *external and ſenſible.*

Firſt, Let us conſider the happineſs of the ſaints, in that part of their celeſtial worſhip, which is internal and ſpiritual; and, in general, we muſt frequently recal to our minds the imperfection of our preſent diſcoveries, and remember, that "eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what the Lord hath laid up for them that love him." There may, for any thing we know, be diſcoveries, and

by conſequence, acts of worſhip, and diſpoſitions of mind correſponding to them, totally different in kind from any thing we are now capable of, as well as higher in degree. Of theſe we muſt be abſolutely ſilent: therefore, all that ſhall follow upon this ſubject, is founded upon the following remark, That whatever acts of worſhip we have now any experience of, and by which we are initiated, ſo to ſpeak, into, and trained up for the employment of heaven, ſhall then be performed to far greater perfection, and with infinitely greater joy.

In order to the more diſtinct conſideration of this ſubject, you may obſerve, that all the acts of worſhip, of which we are now capable, may be reduced to the four following kinds: Firſt, Acts of adoration. Secondly, Of gratitude. Thirdly, Of deſire. And, Fourthly, Of truſt and ſubjection.

In the firſt place, Acts of adoration. By theſe, as diſtinguiſhed from the others mentioned, I underſtand the immediate contemplation of the glorious excellence of the divine nature, and the exerciſe of theſe affections of ſoul which correſpond to it. The nature of God is diſcovered, and his glory exhibited to view, in all his works, and in all his ways. And he is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem and deepeſt admiration, and moſt ardent love of every reaſonable creature, for what he is in himſelf, independent of any intereſt they may have, or hope to have in his favour. Therefore it is the firſt duty and chief end of man, to give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name. I know this is what worldly men, who live in ſin cannot underſtand, and therefore are apt to deride; which is indeed the caſe with reſpect to all

the truths of God conſidered in their full extent, and as reſting upon their proper foundation; the natural man cannot receive them. But as it is the firſt commandment of the law, "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve;" ſo it is the leading and the capital truth taught and repeated in the ſacred oracles, that all things were made for, that all things ſhall finally tend to, and therefore all intelligent creatures ought, ſupremely, to aim at the glory of God. This may be eaſily ſupported by unprejudiced reaſon; for what can be more juſt than to have the higheſt eſteem of the higheſt excellence, the deepeſt admiration of boundleſs and ſpotleſs perfection, and a ſupreme love for what is infinitely amiable. It is wholly owing to the corruption of our nature, that we are ſo little ſenſible of the ſin of neglecting this. And, indeed, a ſhort and juſt deſcription of our corruption may be given thus; it conſiſts in dethroning God, and ſetting up ſelf to be honoured, loved, and ſerved in his room.

But, my brethren, every real Chriſtian has been recovered to a view of this his firſt obligation as a creature; knows experimentally, what it is ſupremely to honour the living and true God, and hath a peculiar pleaſure in the ſurvey and celebration of all his perfections. All ſuch rejoice in his dominion, and feel ſatisfaction in it, as infinitely right and fit, that the will of the Lord ſhould be done. They join, in their manner, on earth, with the heavenly hoſts, as thus repreſented, Rev. xi. 16, 17. "And the four and twenty elders, which ſat before God on their ſeats, fell upon their faces, and worſhipped God, ſaying, We give thee thanks,

O Lord God Almighty, which art, and waſt, and art to come, becauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great power and haſt reigned." Rev. xix. 6. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, ſaying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." But how incomparably more perfect and more joyful, their adoration of God, when they are come into his preſence! then the veil ſhall be drawn aſide; they ſhall "ſee him face to face;" they ſhall "know, even as they are known." Inſtead of theſe comparatively obſcure hints and intimations, which they now have of his glory, then the whole extenſive plan of providence, of which they now ſee only a ſmall detached part, ſhall be opened to their view: then ſhall they ſee the overthrow and ſubjection of the pride and arrogance, and boaſted wiſdom of man, "which is fooliſhneſs with God; and the bleſſed, happy iſſue of theſe various trials of the people of God, which formerly gave them ſo many anxious and diſtruſtful thoughts. But why do I mention particulars, when all the effects of creating ſkill, all the fruits of ſupporting and preſerving goodneſs, ſhall be laid before them?

And is there not ſome lover of Chriſt ſaying, here, within himſelf, Why do you not mention the myſtery of redemption, "God manifeſted in the fleſh!" in this the glory of God eminently ſhines, his unequalled, his unrivalled glory. That this, as the work of God, (though we can hardly keep our own concerns out of view) ſhall be the particular theme of celeſtial praiſe is not to be doubted, and is evi-

dent from hence, that Chriſt, as the object of worſhip, is repreſented as appearing there like a Lamb that had been ſlain.

Once more, as the church of God at preſent, is the mean of illuſtrating his wiſdom to principalities and powers, or to the angelic hoſts, which we learn from Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God;" ſo the order and government of theſe ſuperior intelligences ſhall be opened to the view of the ſaints in glory. In the proſpect of all this they ſhall ſay, Rev. xv. 3. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints." With what exultation of ſoul, then, with what fervour of adoring wonder, and admiring love, ſhall they celebrate the divine glory! As they ſhall be wholly freed from every degree of ſinful and ſelfiſh bias, they ſhall feel the cleareſt conviction of the obligation of their duty, and diſcharge it by a free, unconſtrained impulſe of ſoul: for the ſame reaſon, the pleaſure ariſing from it will be ſo much the more pure and unmixed, that it is not aimed at on its own account, nor purchaſed by any compliance that might but ſeem to have a mercenary view.

In the ſecond place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of gratitude and praiſe. And, here, obſerve, that though I have conſidered the diſintereſted love of God, and the humble adoration of his own matchleſs inherent excellence as firſt both in order and dignity, which it ought to be, this does not take away, or ſuperſede acts of thanks-

giving, but rather lays the juſteſt and nobleſt foundation for their exerciſe; becauſe it ſubjects the creature to the Creator; keeps its dependance and obedience continually in view, and greatly inhances the favours beſtowed by ſuch a hand, and upon ſuch objects. Gratitude for the goodneſs of God, is what ſurely we may have ſome conception of, even in this ſtate, in which he loads us with his benefits, and in which every moment of our continuance is a proof and evidence of his patience and forbearance. The ſaints eſpecially, who have learned not only to diſcern and confeſs the hand that ſuſtains them, but to acknowledge God as the God of their ſalvation, muſt underſtand what it is to praiſe him for his mercies.

But how much louder muſt the voice of praiſe be in heaven than in earth? The mercies for which they give praiſe are incomparably greater; ſo is alſo the uniformity and ſecurity of their poſſeſſion. What is the richeſt and moſt gorgeous attire, the moſt ſumptuous and delicate fare, which this world can afford, compared with thoſe rivers of pleaſures which are at God's right hand? How imperfect are all the enjoyments of this ſtate by reaſon of the ſufferings and ſorrows that are mingled with them? We are apt to envy one another through ignorance; but the man liveth not on earth, who hath not ſome ſorrows to allay his proſperity, except perhaps, for a few moments, when the mind is ingroſſed, and as it were intoxicated with ſome late acquiſition. Our preſent character is ſuch as doth not admit of perfect happineſs. Here muſt be the fire of affliction to purge away the droſs of ſin. But in the world to come,

the happineſs of the ſaints is perfect and unmixed, for the people ſhall be all righteous. So it is ſaid in the words immediately following the text: "They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. And, Rev. xxi. 3, 4. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, ſaying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things are paſſed away." The precarioufneſs of our preſent enjoyments greatly diminiſhes their value; they are very uncertain in their own nature, and our continuance with them is equally ſo. But, in heaven there ſhall be no more death, the inhabitants ſhall go no more out; and their enjoyments ſhall be ſuch as can neither waſte nor change. How animated, then, muſt be the praiſes of the higher houſe, eſpecially when the reflection upon the wretchedneſs and precarioufneſs of their paſt ſtate muſt ſo greatly improve their ſenſe of the riches and ſecurity of the preſent? Let me ſuppoſe a caſe, which indeed happens every day, though the effect of it is not fully diſcernible by us; ſuppoſe a poor Chriſtian, perhaps poor in this world, but certainly poor in ſpirit, who hath long ſtruggled with the evils of life, who hath patiently endured the inſulting language, and diſdainful eye, of the proud and proſperous, nay, which is far worſe, hath been diſtreſſed with many anxious fears concerning his own future ſtate; ſuch an one, taken from the world,

how amazing, how bleſſed the change! from an earthly cottage, to a throne of glory; from a deſpiſing world, to an approving God; from a frail, diſeaſed dying body, to everlaſting ſtrength, and undecaying beauty! how muſt his mouth be filled with praiſes, when the days of his mourning are for ever ended!

But that which eſpecially ſerves to enliven the praiſes of the ſaints in heaven is, their ſenſe of their own unworthineſs as ſinners: this it is which makes all the gifts of God of ſevenfold value, they are all of free unmerited grace and mercy. Redemption! Redemption is the theme of the praiſes of heaven, Rev. i. 5. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood." Rev. v. 9. "And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Redemption is at preſent careleſsly ſought after, and coldly acknowledged; but then ſhall they know the guilt they have contracted, the hell they have eſcaped, the glory which they poſſeſs, and the price at which it was bought. Oh, my brethren! how light a ſenſe of the evil of ſin has the moſt humbled penitent now, compared to what he ſhall have in heaven! how light a ſenſe of the miſery of the impenitent, compared to what he ſhall have after he has heard their ſentence pronounced by the Judge, and ſeen them go away into everlaſting puniſhment! how ſmall a value does he put upon the gift of God, eternal life, till he taſte of it! and how weak is his love to God in Chriſt, whilſt it is only kindled by faith, compared to what

it ſhall be, when he ſees the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world!

In the third place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of deſire. There is much of this in the diſpoſition of the people of God on earth, they ſay with the prophet Iſaiah, ch. xxvi. 8. "The deſire of our ſoul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." And as every agreeable object is the more deſired, the more it is known; ſo the clear diſcovery that is made in heaven, of the glory and excellence of God, and the delightful communications of his love, muſt ſtill increaſe our deſire of further and further degrees of it; and there is a fulneſs, both in the divine nature and benignity, that can never be exhauſted. Earthly things, indeed, to which we often, through ignorance, affix an erroneous and exceſſive value, the more they are known, are often the leſs eſteemed; but this can never take place where the object cannot be eſteemed in proportion to its worth, becauſe its worth can never be completely diſcovered. Perhaps it may be thought improper to include deſire among the acts of celeſtial worſhip, as there the happy ſouls ſhall be ſo fully gratified in every holy inclination, as to leave no room for any further demand. But we muſt conſider that there ſhall be room for an everlaſting progreſſive improvement to every finite creature; and the gradual enlargement of their capacity ſhall make way for theſe further communications of divine love.

There ſhall, indeed, be no ſuch deſire, as implies any anxious or impatient craving. This is ordinarily produced by doubt, or difficulty of ſupply, which

can have no place here; but there may, nevertheleſs, be ſuch deſire as leads to, and prepares for the continuance or increaſe of enjoyment. It is natural indeed for us, from our preſent experience, to conceive, that deſire muſt weaken or leſſen with poſſeſſion, as it is chiefly kept up by variety and novelty, a love of which ſeems to be ſo eſſential to, and powerful in the human nature. To remove this apprehenſion, I obſerve theſe two things, Firſt, That in the infinity of the divine perfections and works, there is ſufficient diverſity to employ and gratify a finite creature, through all eternity; ſo that if it pleaſe God to continue, after the reſurrection, a love of novelty, or any diſpoſition ſimilar to it, he is well able to provide it with proper exerciſe.

But, ſecondly, It appears highly probable, that the love of change, ſo obſervable in human nature, is more owing to the vanity of created enjoyments, than any thing eſſential to us, as rational ſpirits; and, therefore, when we enjoy the ſubſtance inſtead of the ſhadow, the Creator inſtead of or in the creature, the cauſe being gone, the effect will ceaſe of courſe. And, to confirm this, we may obſerve, that novelty is not an eſſential qualification of what pleaſes us; for habit often creates as ſtrong or ſtronger attachment to what we have long known, than the charms of novelty to what is untried: enjoyment therefore may, in ſome caſes, excite deſire. And if this is the caſe ſometimes on earth, there is all reaſon to think it will be always ſo in heaven. May I not juſt add, that we find from our preſent imperfect experience, that a life of hope and activity, when there is ſuitable encouragement and ſucceſs,

from time to time, is the moſt agreeable of any that can be conceived? How delightful then muſt be both the habitual and actual deſires of the ſaints in glory, pointed at the worthieſt objects, and not only aſſured of, but rewarded with complete ſatisfaction!

In the fourth and laſt place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of truſt and ſubjection. I join them together, becauſe they are very much involved in, and founded upon one another. And I have mentioned them laſt, becauſe the iſſue of every ſerious exerciſe of a believer's ſoul, of every act of communion with God, is ordinarily his being brought to a compoſed truſt, complacency, and acquieſcence in God as his ſatisfying portion; and a conſecration of himſelf and his all to God in obedience and ſubmiſſion. And how infinitely more complete, as well as joyful, muſt the truſt and ſubmiſſion of the ſaints be in heaven than on earth! If even here they ſay, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him: it is the Lord, let him him do what ſeemeth him good;" how much more reaſon have they to put an unſhaken truſt in God, when they have taſted the fruits of his love, and received the proof of his faithfulneſs, in the actual poſſeſſion of his promiſes! as the Pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. ix. 10. "They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee."

Thus clear diſcoveries of God's nature, and extenſive views of his works and ways, muſt eſtabliſh them in a cheerful dependance on his unchangeable truth. And, O, with what a readineſs, or rather with what pleaſure and alacrity, will they reſign

themſelves to his will, and conſecrate themſelves to his ſervice! There will then be no remains of the carnal mind to refuſe obedience, or of an impatient murmuring ſpirit, to complain under the yoke; but they will be as the angels, his miniſters to do his pleaſure, ready at his call, and earneſtly coveting employment. Obedience will be their prevailing inclination, and the formal expreſſion, and tender of it, to their God and Redeemer, will be a part of their actual ſervice.

And, now, to conclude this head, you may obſerve, that I could not avoid, in illuſtrating the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, frequently to bring in view their habitual frame and conſtant employment; but I hope this is not altogether improper; for there is not, by far, ſo great a difference between their acts of worſhip, and their ordinary work, as between ours on earth. They run into one another and are very much of a ſimilar nature; they are ſhadowed forth but very faintly, in the ſtate of that man on earth, who walks with God all the day long. As his life is a conſtant courſe, either of vocal or mental worſhip, ſo, in a higher degree, they are *before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple.*

Let us, now, in the ſecond place, conſider the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, as it is external and ſenſible. That there is ſomething even external and ſenſible in it, neceſſarily follows from the reſurrection of the body, which is ſo important a part of the Chriſtian doctrine: for though the bodies with which the ſaints ſhall be clothed at the reſurrection, ſhall exceedingly differ from their groſs bodies, in

ſplendour and beauty, and particularly ſhall ſo far excel them in purity, as to be termed by the apoſtle Paul (1 Cor. xv. 44.) "Spiritual bodies;" yet, if they be body or matter at all, they muſt be limited to ſome place, and have an external and ſenſible form. The ſame thing appears from that beautiful paſſage in the book of Job, ch. xix. 25. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth."

Further, though we are no doubt taught in ſcripture, to conſider heaven more as a nature than a place, yet there is evident foundation from ſeveral expreſſions, to ſuppoſe that there is ſome portion of the works of God ſet apart for that purpoſe, and adorned with ſuch a viſible glory, as is proper to affect the imaginations of created beings. Thus there is mention made of the third heaven, the higheſt heaven, the heaven of heavens See alſo Rev. xxi. i. 2. "And I ſaw a new heaven, and a new earth; for the firſt heaven and the firſt earth were paſſed away; and there was no more ſea; and I John ſaw the holy city, new Jeruſalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her huſband." And, from the 19th verſe of that chapter to the end, it is deſcribed in ſuch terms, as naturally ſuggeſt to us the greateſt glory and magnificence.

This is the temple of God in which his ſervants ſhall ſerve him, in which we may ſuppoſe the general aſſembly of the church of the firſt born meet together, for the joint celebration of their Creator and Redeemer's praiſe. But as to a more particular account, either of the place or manner of the worſhip there performed, it were more eaſy to form

amuſing and curious ſpeculations, than to fix upon any thing ſolid and certain. In this, as indeed in every other part of the heavenly ſtate and employment, comparative reflections are moſt to be depended on. And ſurely, if in this lower world, and that part of the creation, which is at preſent ſubjected to our view, there is ſo much order and beauty, ſo much ſplendour and magnificence, though it be the abode of guilty creatures, under manifeſt tokens of divine diſpleaſure, what muſt be the unclouded luſtre and perfect beauty of that place, where the glory of Almighty God is peculiarly diſplayed, and which was prepared for the reception of the objects of his ſpecial love, before the foundation of the world? If the ſeveral ſenſes, with which we are now endued are capable of affording us ſo exquiſite a pleaſure in their preſent gratification, notwithſtanding their apparent diſorder, how high and raviſhing a delight may they communicate when they are refined and purified, furniſhed with their proper objects, and freed from that inſatiableneſs, and tendency to exceſs, which is the fruit of ſin, the evidence of a corrupted frame, and, as a mixture of gall, poiſons every worldly joy? It is worth obſervation, upon this ſubject, that the happineſs of the ſaints is many times deſcribed in ſcripture, by their external circumſtances and poſition, ſo to ſpeak, and by ſenſible gratifications; as by ſitting upon thrones at the right hand of God; by a city highly adorned; by a river of water of life, a tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits. And his ſervice is deſcribed by the melody of ſongs of praiſe, and even by inſtrumental muſic, Rev. xv. 2. where mention

is made of the harps of God. Now, though God forbid that we ſhould underſtand theſe expreſſions in ſuch a manner, as to ſuppoſe that the enjoyments of the ſaints above have any thing in them reſembling the groſſneſs of preſent ſenſual indulgence, yet we may with ſafety conclude, that as the body ſhall then join in the ſervice of God, it ſhall be inſtrumental in perceiving the pleaſure of it; and that a ſenſe and perception of the beauty and grandeur of that temple of the living God, in which they offer up their celeſtial ſacrifices, ſhall increaſe and enliven their gratitude to, and adoration of him, who raiſed the glorious fabric.

But the external circumſtance, which, in my apprehenſion, will contribute moſt to the delight and happineſs of the ſaints, in their heavenly worſhip, will be their union and ſociety in it. Man is evidently framed for deriving his chief happineſs in this ſtate from ſociety. It never was, and never will be good for man to live alone. Social worſhip is peculiarly acceptable to God, as might be ſhewn from many paſſages of ſcripture, Math. xviii. 19, 20. "Again, I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them." Pſal. lxxxvii. 2. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." And doth not the experience of every one of thoſe who love the habitation of God's houſe, and the place where his honour dwelleth, teſtify what an

elevation of ſoul, and enlargement of heart, they obtain by mingling their voices in his praiſe? As united fires brighten each other's blaze, as many concordant ſounds make the finer harmony, ſo the union of many hearts in divine worſhip makes the higher ſpiritual melody, not only more grateful to God, but more delightful to themſelves. The pleaſure of this is, indeed, greatly allayed on earth by a mixture of diſcordant notes (to continue the former alluſion) of enemies with friends. But allow me to make a ſuppoſition, that all within theſe walls, this evening, were perfectly upright with God, and that our mutual ſincerity were perfectly known to each other, what inexpreſſible fervency, and rapture of ſpirit would it give to every one, in ſinging the praiſes of God and of the Lamb, to conſider himſelf as joined with ſuch a number of pure, holy, bleſſed, redeemed ſouls? But how much beyond conception will this be increaſed, when we meet with the innumerable company of the redeemed above, and all our pious fathers, who, many ages before this, ſerved our common maſter; many, we hope, who kept holy days in this very place, and whoſe bodies now ſleep in the duſt under our feet, and around us; nay, when all from the eaſt and from the weſt, ſhall be completely gathered in, when every heart ſhall agree with every tongue, and ſalvation to the Lamb ſhall be the univerſal, delightful, repeated acclamation? There are two paſſages of ſcripture which ſpeak of the multitude, and employment of this glorious company, which ought never to be read with-

out a holy and delightful reverence. Rev. v. 9. 15. "And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and the four beaſts ſaid Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down, and worſhipped him that liveth for ever and ever." Rev. vii. 9, 12. "After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ſaying, Amen, bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever, Amen."

I proceed now to conclude the ſubject by ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And can we refuſe to begin, by praiſing God for his unſpeakable love, and matchleſs condeſcenſion? The whole work of our redemption is wonderful; but, in a particular manner, the concluſion of it: that we ſhould not only have our clothes waſhed in the blood of the Lamb, but ſhould be *before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple.* At the dedication of the temple of Solomon, that wiſe and pious prince breaks out into an expreſſion of holy admiration and aſtoniſhment, and ſays, 2 Chron. vi. 18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth! Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much

leſs this houſe which I have built!" How much greater reaſon have we to ſay, when recollecting our guilt and unworthineſs, "and ſhall men in very deed dwell with God in heaven!" how amazing the diſtance! how glorious the dwelling and employment! and how mean the invited gueſts! Let us take confuſion of face to ourſelves, and acknowledge, that this cannot be accounted for, but by the propitiation and purchaſe of the eternal Son of God, as the only foundation of our hope. Let us, in the view of every privilege, renew the exercife of faith in him, as giving us a title to it; and on this occaſion, particularly, beg of him to lead us, by his Spirit, through all the neceſſary ſteps of previous preparation, and at laſt receive us into his glory.

In the ſecond place, from what has been ſaid, you may ſee the importance and benefit of the worſhip and ſervice of God on earth. If this ſtate is a ſtate of trial and preparation for that which is to follow it, and the worſhip of God is ſo great a part of the employment, and ſo great a ſource of the happineſs of the ſaints above, it is plain, that his worſhip on earth muſt be of the higheſt uſefulneſs. It is not only an unqueſtionable duty, but it is manifeſtly neceſſary to fit us for, and habituate us to the heavenly exercife. It is plain from the whole analogy of providence, that a preparation of nature is neceſſary for the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of any ſtate. We ſee, even in natural things, that ſowing, and a long time of gradual nouriſhment, is neceſſary to the ſtrength and conſiſtency of any plant or tree; and that, according to the ſeed, ſo is the production. This the

Apoſtle very ſtrongly applies, Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap." Thoſe that expect to ſerve God in his temple above, muſt be habituated to ſerve him in his church on earth. This is the ſeed-time; then is the harveſt. The houſe of God is the place both of the birth and nouriſhment of his people, Pſal. lxxxvii. 5. "And of Zion it ſhall be ſaid, This and that man was born in her; and the higheſt himſelf ſhall eſtabliſh her."

Therefore ſuffer me, my brethren, to reprove the ſin, and ſhew the danger of thoſe, who altogether neglect and deſpiſe the worſhip of God. If chance, imitation, curioſity, or a worſe motive, has brought to this audience, any who are habitual deſpiſers of the worſhip of God, I hereby aſſure them, in his name, that, unleſs they change their heart and practice, in heaven they ſhall never dwell, becauſe its employment they do not love. It is both the evidence and cauſe of the degeneracy of many in this age, that they have fallen into a neglect and contempt of the public worſhip of God; that in their notions of religion, when they form any at all, they in a great meaſure, leave out their duty to their Maker, and confine it only to a few of the ordinary offices due from one man to another Experience, indeed, plainly ſhews the weakneſs and feebleneſs of thoſe virtues that are not enlivened and animated by piety towards God; and that it is as poſſible to uphold the ſuperſtructure, by taking away the foundation, to preſerve the vigour and verdure of the branches of a tree, by ſeparating them from the

root, as to preſerve and ſecure any regularity of conduct, without a principle of divine life, of vital, ſpiritual union with God through Chriſt; but what, in a particular manner, ſhews the folly of all ſuch, is their relation to eternity. Suppoſing their practice were every way fit and proper for this world, how does it agree with the employment of heaven? Doth not conſcience tell you, that you have neither right nor reliſh, nor even capacity for it, and, by neceſſary conſequence, are under a ſentence of condemnation, "children of wrath, and heirs of hell?" for there is no middle ſtate. I beſeech you therefore, nay, obteſt you, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that you henceforth honour God in his houſe and ordinances, if you expect that ever he ſhould honour you: and, remember, that his warning, which you have received by the wiſe diſpoſal of his providence, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if you neglect and deſpiſe it.

I cannot help, alſo, upon this occaſion, putting you in mind of the neglected duty of worſhipping God in your families. Theſe ſmaller ſocieties, in which the members are connected by the ſtrongeſt ties, and ſtand in the neareſt and moſt endearing relations to one another, how proper are they for the joint worſhip of God! and how great is the ſin of neglecting it! How can you expect any thing elſe, but either an angry providence, or hardening and ſtupifying proſperity, which is infinitely worſe, unleſs you call on the name of God? whereas by mingling your voices in his praiſes on earth, you prepare yourſelves for his ſervice in heaven. I can-

not go through all the excuſes offered for this neglect; but wo ſhall be to that man, who is too buſy, too proud, or too modeſt, to worſhip in his family, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who made him by his power, and upholds him by his providence.

In the third place, let me improve this ſubject for the trial of thoſe whoſe ſtate is more doubtful. However many open enemies there are to religion in theſe days, it is to be lamented, that there are many alſo, who continue their attendance upon the ordinances of God, but in a cold and formal manner, and reſting upon the form, without the power, lay themſelves aſleep in ſecurity. Bring yourſelves to the teſt, then, and ſuffer conſcience to diſcover the truth, however painful and mortifying. Is there any of you, who has heard of the employment of the ſaints above, as conſiſting in the ſervice of God, who are not able to conceive the happineſs or delight of ſuch work? Is there any among you, who weary of the ſervice of God, not from weakneſs of body, but from averſion of mind, who, immediately after, return to the world, and its enjoyments, with eagerneſs and lightneſs of mind, like a bullock, when he is looſed from the yoke? Such have good reaſon to ſuſpect their condition, and to fear, that they are unrenewed in heart. But, I hope, there are not a few, who, from their heart, call the ſabbath "a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable; who eſteem a day in God's courts, better than a thouſand;" whoſe higheſt joy it is, to have their hearts captivated with his love, and their affections enlarged in his praiſe; and

whoſe indiſpoſition often to this work, by ſloth or worldlineſs of mind, is their greateſt grief. Such, my brethren, have good reaſon to look forward to that happy time, when they ſhall ſerve him with unwearied vigour and alacrity; and ſhall behold the ſmile of his countenance without one mortifying frown.

In the fourth place, I would improve this ſubject for the conſolation of the afflicted. The hope of glory is the true and proper ſource of conſolation; whether your ſorrow ariſes from ſuffering, or from ſin; for both theſe ſhall be perfect ſtrangers to the happy abode of the ſaints above. If you are under the anxiety of worldly care, the oppreſſion and reproach of the ungodly, the attacks of ſickneſs, the gradual looſening of the pins of this feeble tottering frame; if theſe weaken the ſtrength, and mar the melody of your preſent ſongs, and compel you to mix your praiſes with groans, remember, that in a ſhort time, theſe complaints will be at an end, the harps of God will be given you, and ſkill to handle them. If a ſenſe of inherent corruption, if grief for an abſent or an angry God, make your hands to hang down, exert the hope of being not only perfectly happy, but perfectly holy, and ſerving him day and night in his temple.

This leads me, in the laſt place, To direct you to improve this ſubject for animating your preſent devotion. Nothing is more proper for this purpoſe than the lively hope, or rather anticipation of the heavenly employment. Let us overcome our preſent ſloth, by entering, in faith and hope, within the vail,

and conſidering how we ſhall then praiſe him: then there ſhall be no wandering thought, no cold heart, no faultering tongue, no flagging ſpirits. And, as without all queſtion, ſome are here preſent, not a few, I would charitably hope, who ſhall enter into that temple of the living God; ſo we know not how ſoon any of us may be ſent for, to leave this worldly ſanctuary to be above the uſe of preſent ordinances, and to join the innumerable company about the throne. In the proſpect of this, Pſal. cxlix. 1, 2. "Let us ſing unto the Lord a new ſong, and his praiſe in the congregation of ſaints. Let Iſrael rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king." Amen.

SERMON IX.

MINISTERIAL FIDELITY IN DECLARING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

ACTS xx. 26, 27.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.

My Brethren,

THESE words are a part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, when taking leave of them, under a firm perſuaſion, or rather a certain knowledge, that he would never again ſee them in the body. My preſent ſituation, of which none of you is ignorant, has determined me to the choice of this paſſage, as a very proper ſubject from which I may conclude the exercise of my miniſtry among you. I had once occaſion, on leaving another charge, to have taken a formal farewel of a very affectionate people, but had not courage to attempt it. The circumſtances attending the removal, which, if Providence prevent not, ſeems now to be at hand, are ſuch as do not leſſen, but greatly increaſe the difficulty of ſpeaking from ſuch a ſubject. And yet,

in another view, they ſeemed to urge it ſo ſtrongly, and to preſent ſuch an opportunity of being uſeful, as I durſt not wholly decline. Every Chriſtian ought to be an obſerver of providence. Nothing will more effectually promote his holineſs and comfort. And both a miniſter and his people ought to improve the aſpect of providence, when it hath any thing peculiar in it, to their mutual benefit.

Let me therefore intreat you to attend to the following diſcourſe, with patience and compoſure. This requeſt I the rather hope you will comply with, as there is nothing intended that is perſonal, further than muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the ſubject itſelf, or be unavoidably ſuggeſted by your own thoughts. I bleſs God that I have no complaint to make of want of duty or affection upon your ſide; neither is it any part of my purpoſe to juſtify my own conduct, during the time that I have had the honour and happineſs of being entruſted with the miniſtry of the goſpel in this place. I ſhall therefore only ſay, that whether I have been able to deliver my own ſoul by fidelity in duty, and by purity of principle, I am certain, that very much has been laid to the charge of many of yours. Leaſt of all do I intend to endeavour to ſatisfy you of the motives which have induced me to accept of a call to a diſtant part of the world, and, in ſome degree, a different employment in the church of Chriſt. For this, I know that an account muſt be given, in due time, to a much greater Judge, with whoſe approbation either the applauſe or cenſure of men are not worthy to be laid in the balance. The ſingle purpoſe, therefore, of the following diſcourſe, ſhall be to give you ſuch

a comprehenſive view of the truths of the everlaſting goſpel,—of the importance and difficulty of a miniſter's work; as may direct you in the choice of another paſtor,—increaſe your eſteem of ſuch as are faithful,—and excite you to guard againſt every thing that may either diſcourage them in their work, or prevent their ſucceſs.

The apoſtle Paul had planted the church of Epheſus, and he had ſpent a part of his time there, very conſiderable, if we conſider the extent of his commiſſion, and his many apoſtolic journies to different parts of the world. In the whole of his diſcourſe to the elders of that church, whom he had ſent for in his paſſage to Rome, we ſee the greateſt tenderneſs and affection, and an earneſt concern to engrave upon their hearts the truths which he had taught them while reſiding there. And, in the words of the text, you ſee the foundation on which he takes them to record that he was *free from the blood of all men; for*, ſays he, *I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.* I omit every thing that might be occaſionally introduced from the text or context, ſuch as miniſters being chargeable with the blood of thoſe who periſh by their neglect, and the doctrine of the goſpel being the counſel of God, that I may fix your attention, where certainly the emphaſis of this declaration lies, viz. That he had declared to them *all the counſel of God*, and that he had not *ſhunned* to do ſo; or that he had not been deterred by any difficulties from the faithful diſcharge of his truſt. Therefore, in diſcourſing further on this ſubject, I will endeavour, through divine aſſiſtance,

I. To consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God.

II. To consider the difficulties which may lie in his way, or tempt him to *shun* any part of his work.

III. To make a particular improvement of the subject, by giving you my parting advices in the spirit of this passage, and in a way to the best of my judgment suited to your situation.

I. Then, Let us consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God. This is a circumstance which the apostle seems to have laid particular stress upon in his discourse to the elders of Ephesus, as he not only rests his solemn appeal to themselves in this passage upon it, but had mentioned it before, verses 20, 21. "And how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." It is, indeed, a circumstance of the utmost moment, as ministers may be supposed much more ready to fall short in this respect than in any other. It is probable that many more are chargeable with concealing truth, than affirming falsehood; with neglecting duty, than committing crimes; with not building the house, than wilfully pulling it down. Agreeably to this, we find the charge of the prophet against unfaithful shepherds is chiefly, or only, for neglect of duty, Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4. "Son of man prophesy against the

ſhepherds of Iſrael, propheſy and ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord God unto the ſhepherds, Wo be to the ſhepherds of Iſrael, that do feed themſelves: ſhould not the ſhepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock: the diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthened, neither have ye healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." But that you may have as comprehenſive a view as poſſible, of the character of a faithful miniſter, given in the text, obſerve, that integrity in declaring all the counſel of God, implies the following particulars.

1. Declaring all the truths of God without any exceptions. The revealed will of God is of great extent and compaſs. It takes in all that we are to believe concerning God, and all the duty which God requires of man. It gives us an account of the original, and of the fallen ſtate of man; of the early purpoſe of divine mercy, and the ſteps that were taken, from age to age, in carrying it into execution; of the perſon, undertaking, and ſufferings of the Saviour; of his laws as a teacher, and his dominion as a king. Together with all this, we have a hiſtory of providence, and many ſpecial examples, inſtructions, and warnings of the moſt particular kind. Now, my brethren, he who would declare *all the counſel of God*, muſt pay a due regard to every part, and, as far as time and health is given him, endeavour to make his people ac-

quainted with the whole. This, to be ſure, cannot be done all at once and at the ſame time. Doubtleſs there are ſome truths of more importance than others. As the foundation muſt be laid before the ſtructure can be raiſed, and the foundation and corner ſtones are of more moment than the finiſhings of the ſurface; yet there is a mutual ſubſerviency of every one in its place to another, and not the leaſt can be wholly omitted without a real injury to thoſe that are retained.

There is a preciouſneſs in every truth that hath the ſtamp of divine authority upon it; and, therefore, to neglect any of them, and count them trifling, or of little moment, argues a want of reverence for the word of God. The holy ſcriptures, as they are full and complete, containing every thing that is neceſſary; ſo they are perfect and faultleſs, containing nothing that is unneceſſary. Serious perſons have often borne teſtimony to the great utility of ſuch parts of the ſacred oracles, as are commonly treated with moſt indifference. Nay, I cannot help thinking, that the veneration due to God, who doth nothing in vain, obliges us to believe the utility even of thoſe paſſages whoſe purpoſe we ourſelves may not as yet have clearly perceived.

They are therefore greatly to be blamed who are at no pains to make known the counſel of God, in its full extent; but how much more thoſe who ſatisfy themſelves with inſiſting upon ſome things, which may be moſt agreeable to their own taſte and diſpoſition, to the entire neglect of others that are perhaps of equal or of greater moment? We ſee this happen too frequently, that things which fill almoſt

every page in the holy ſcriptures can ſcarce obtain a place in many ſermons. We ſee ſome induſtriouſly avoid the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, and others the duties of the moral law. The evil of this is the greater, that there is ſuch a relation between the ſeveral parts of God's revealed will, that if any one is left out, every view given of the reſt muſt be not only partial but unjuſt. He who truly underſtands the ſcriptures, will ſoon perceive, that there is ſuch an inſeparable connection between one truth and another, that you can hardly admit one without admitting or rejecting the whole; and that none of them can be withdrawn, or concealed, without a manifeſt injury to the beauty and fulneſs of the general ſyſtem.

But, of all others, the moſt wonderful ſet of men are thoſe, who are for concealing ſome of the truths of God, leſt they ſhould be abuſed. The ſovereignty of God, his eternal purpoſe, and the freeneſs of his grace, are often paſſed by under this ridiculous pretence. I would deſpiſe the wiſdom of ſuch perſons; it is arrogance; it is impiety. I do not know any truth that cannot be abuſed by perverſe and corrupt minds, or that has not, in many inſtances, been abuſed. But is this a reaſon for concealing them? No. I would preach them openly; I would preach them fully; I would endeavour to guard them againſt the abuſe; and let ſinners know, that, if they wreſt the good word of God, they do it to their own deſtruction. Oh! that there were more ſubjection of mind to the wiſdom of God: more of a deep and inward conviction, that whatever he hath appointed is, for that very reaſon, wiſeſt and beſt.

There would not then be ſo many attempts to explain away what is clearly contained in the New Teſtament; but we ſhould join from the heart, with the apoſtle Paul, in ſaying, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"

2. Integrity in declaring *all the counſel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel in their full and juſt proportion. Under the former particular, I have ſhewn the neceſſity of doing juſtice to every truth; let us now add the duty of giving their full room and place to important and fundamental truths. In order to make a juſt portrait of a human body, it is neceſſary, not only to have all the parts, but to have every one in the true proportion it bears to another. If one member is ſwelled to an unnatural or monſtrous bulk, and others are ſhrunk or ſhrivelled away almoſt to nothing, it will make the moſt unſeemly figure. Agreeably to this, he who would faithfully *declare the counſel of God*, muſt have a particular eye to the great and leading truths of the goſpel, on which the reſt depend, and from which they derive their force and meaning.

If we look into the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, we ſhall find certain leading truths which are of ſo great moment, that they ought hardly ever to be out of view; ſuch as the loſt ſtate of man by nature; the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through Chriſt; the ſuffering of the Saviour in the ſinner's room; and free forgiveneſs through the blood of the atonement; the neceſſity of regeneration; and the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, to enlighten, ſanctify, and

comfort his people. Theſe truths are of ſuch unſpeakable moment in divine revelation, that they ought to be clearly explained, ſtrongly inculcated, and frequently repeated; they are the doctrines of the reformation; they make the ſubſtance of all the Proteſtant confeſſions; they are the glory of the Proteſtant churches; and have been ſealed by the blood of thouſands of ſuffering martyrs. And, indeed, it comforts me, under the neglect with which they are treated at preſent, by many worldly perſons in a ſtate of outward eaſe and ſecurity to the church, that, if ever it pleaſe God, for our ſins, to throw us into the furnace, they will then diſcover their honour, they will recover their luſtre, becauſe they will certainly manifeſt their influence.

How ſhall I make you more ſenſible what it is to give their full room to theſe important truths, than by putting you in mind of the regard that was paid to them by the apoſtles of our Lord, who received their commiſſion immediately from himſelf, and were not only the firſt, but the beſt and moſt ſucceſsful miniſters that ever were employed in the church of Chriſt? What a multitude of paſſages might I cite to this purpoſe! Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there ſalvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved." 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt." Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. "But what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt

Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith." Without citing any more paſſages, I ſhall only obſerve, that though the apoſtles introduced a great variety of truths in their writings occaſionally, ſuch was, in their opinion, the importance of the doctrine of ſalvation by the croſs of Chriſt, that they denominated the goſpel by it. Preaching Chriſt, and preaching the croſs of Chriſt, was, with them, the ſame thing as preaching the whole. I do not think the apoſtle Paul was defective in giving particular inſtructions upon every ſubject, to thoſe churches which he either planted or watered; yet he ſays to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ii. 2. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified;" intimating, that ſuch was his attachment to that great truth, that it would occupy, in a manner, the whole of his time and labour; or rather that it had ſuch an intimate connection with every other part of the will of God, that, be the ſubject what it would, this could hardly be entirely out of view.

He who would declare the whole *counſel of God*, muſt ſtill place theſe great and operative doctrines in a conſpicuous point of view; he muſt not paſs them over ſlightly; he muſt not even ſpeak of them coldly, but in ſuch a manner, as to ſhew, that he knows their truth, and feels their moment. What an inconſiſtency for a Chriſtian miniſter, to ſpeak

of the Lord Redeemer in ſuch a ſtyle, as naturally leads the hearers to put him upon a level with Socrates or Plato, or other uninſpired teachers, who never pretended to be ſaviours! What poiſon to the ſouls of men, for any to ſpeak, as if they were ſpeaking to Adam before the fall, and to ſing thoſe ſinners aſleep in ſecurity, whom they ſhould endeavour to alarm, that they may be perſuaded to flee from the wrath to come! What betraying of their truſt, to entertain their people with an affected diſplay of their own talents, or idle ſpeculations, to amuſe the fancy, when they ſhould be building them up in holineſs and comfort, through faith unto ſalvation! The very manner of preaching may be oppoſite to the doctrine of the croſs, which hath ſo much of humility and ſelf-denial in it, as will inſpire, and give a colour, if I may ſpeak ſo, to every word that is ſpoken by him that firmly believes it! On the whole, no other truth or duty will be neglected by a faithful miniſter; but the oftener he ſtands, as it were in the centre of the plan, the more frequently he contemplates the croſs of Chriſt, in which all the lines of divine truth are united, the more clearly will he ſee them, and the better will he be able to judge at what time and place to introduce them.

This leads me to obſerve, in the

3. place, That to *declare all the counſel of God*, is to preach all the truths of God in their proper order and connection. To allude to the ſimilitude formerly uſed of making a portrait of a human body, every member muſt not only be in its juſt proportion, but in its proper place. In teaching every ſcience, there is a certain order that muſt be obſerv-

ed, otherwiſe the labour will be in a great meaſure loſt; but it holds in nothing more ſtrongly than in teaching religion, and opening the truths of the goſpel. I might confirm this by many examples, or rather, indeed, by going through the whole ſyſtem of divine truth, but ſhall only make a remark or two for illuſtrating the obſervation. The neceſſity of ſalvation by Chriſt, is founded upon the loſt ſtate of man by nature. Unleſs the one is firſt eſtabliſhed, the beauty and meaning of the other will wholly diſappear; unleſs we are now in a corrupt and guilty ſtate; unleſs man has, indeed, loſt the knowledge of the true God, the kindneſs of God to his peculiar people, the promiſes in the prophetic writings of light to the Gentiles, and the riches of divine grace in the goſpel, ſpoken of in ſuch magnificent terms, muſt all appear inconſiderable, and unworthy of regard. Unleſs you can convince men of their ſins, and make them ſenſible of the holineſs and juſtice of God, in vain will you preach the goſpel to them; in vain will you call it "glad tidings of great joy to all people;" they do not underſtand the terms, they will deride the meſſage, and ſpurn the offered mercy.

If you preach the free forgiveneſs of ſin through Chriſt, without at the ſame time ſhewing the neceſſity of regeneration and ſanctification by his Spirit, it will either not be embraced at all, or it will be turned into licentiouſneſs. And, if you preach the duties of the law, without at the ſame time diſplaying the grace of the goſpel, and the vital influence that flows from the head to the members, you will either build up men in a deſtructive ſyſtem of

Phariſaical religion and ſelf-righteouſneſs, or bring them under the Egyptian bondage, of making brick though they are not furniſhed with ſtraw. The privileges and duties of the goſpel ſtand in an inſeparable connection; if you take away the firſt, you ſtarve and mortify the laſt. Hear what our Lord ſays, John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." I ſay the ſame thing of not enforcing the duties of the goſpel with the great and powerful motives drawn from its truths. You ſee in what a convincing and affecting manner the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of his own conduct, and that of the other apoſtles, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again." It is doubtleſs lawful, nay, it is for the glory of God, to make occaſional mention of every argument againſt ſin, drawn from nature, reaſon, and experience, to ſhew that "the law is holy, the commandment holy, juſt, and good." But let us not hope to make conſcientious, active, fruitful Chriſtians, any other way, than by teaching them to live "the life that they live in the fleſh, a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himſelf for them."

All who know the grace of God in truth, will

desire to have this connection between one truth and another, and the influence of truth on duty inviolably preserved. It is, indeed, common with some to alledge, that the friends of the gospel, those who are attached to the doctrine of redemption, are enemies to the law, and that they do not love to hear their duty preached to them. I look upon this as an unjust and detestable slander, and commonly spread by those who know nothing of the subserviency of the law to the gospel, or rather who understand very little either of the one or the other. If a minister preaches the holiness of God's nature, with whom evil cannot dwell; if he preaches the duties of the moral law, in all the force of its unchangeable obligation, and all the terror of its awful sanction, in order to convince his hearers, that they are liable to wrath, I know no sound Christian who will find fault with it: nay, I am persuaded, that ministers who love the doctrine of salvation by grace, do often preach the moral law in such terms, that many legal persons are ready to tremble at the hearing of it; for they willingly use the words of the apostle Paul, Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But if serious persons hear the duties of the law preached as the grounds of their acceptance, and the foundation of their peace with God, it is no wonder that they say, after an approved example, "If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Again, if a miniſter preach the duties of the goſpel, explain them in all their extent, and preſs them by arguments drawn from the New Teſtament, as the fruits of faith, as the evidences of their change, as a debt of gratitude to their Redeemer, as the marks of their relation to him, and neceſſary to fit them for his preſence, I believe it will not be unacceptable to any of his people. On the contrary, they do uſually both approve and delight in theſe ſermons which are moſt ſearching to the conſcience, and moſt clear and explicit in the trial of their ſtate. Titus iii. 8. "This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: theſe things are good and profitable unto men." It is our duty to ſhew, not only that profeſſing Chriſtians ought to be holy, but that they muſt be holy; and that if they live and die the ſlaves of any known ſin, Chriſt, and all that he hath done, ſhall profit them nothing, but only aggravate their condemnation. I will bear this teſtimony to my own hearers, that, as it was always a principle with me, to preach the doctrines of redemption where they are, and not to attempt to find them where they are not, by a boundleſs allegorical interpretation; ſo theſe ſermons which have been wholly employed in explaining and enforcing particular duties, opening their principles, diſtinguiſhing hem from their counterfeits, and preſſing them upon the conſcience, have met with as much approbation, and been heard with as little ſuſpicion as any whatever. But if any miniſter had preached in ſuch a manner, as to ſet the doctrine of ſalvation

altogether aſide, and to ſuppoſe, that we could obey in our own ſtrength, or that God was indebted to us for our works, inſtead of our being indebted to him, both for ſtrength to perform them, and mercy to accept them, I believe it would not have paſſed without cenſure; and I ſincerely pray, that the time may never come, when it will, in any corner of this church, but eſpecially from the pulpit in which I now ſtand.

The deluſion and abſurdity that finds place with many, deſerves the greateſt pity. Is it not uncommon to hear certain perſons pouring out the bittereſt invectives in pulpit and converſation againſt others, as enemies to morality, as turning the grace of God into licentiouſneſs, as not only neglecting, but even oppoſing the obligation of his law. In the mean while, if you hear the firſt, you ſhall rarely meet with any thing but what is quite looſe and general, a declamation on the beauty of virtue, and the neceſſity of holineſs, or a very imperfect ſketch of the offices due from man to man in the common intercourſe of ſocial life. And, if you hear the other, it is probable you may hear many of the hard ſayings of the goſpel, not only the neceſſity of doing juſtice, and loving mercy, with the certain damnation of thoſe who hold unjuſt gain without reſtitution; but the neceſſity of loving God above all created comforts, habitually directing every part of our conduct to his glory, and being ſincerely, and without reſerve, ſubmiſſive to his providence. You may alſo, probably, hear the duties of every relation deſcended to with a particularity, and the neglect or breach of them reproved with a ſeverity, that is no where elſe

to be found. Now, I desire to know which of these are the greatest friends to morality. So strong is the deception, that I have known several of the hearers of the most boasted moral preachers, who could not avoid betraying by their discourse, that they considered the exercises of piety, as no part of morality, and very consistently, indeed, with these principles, treated them with the most absolute neglect.

I have little hope of the conviction, but would gladly, if possible, stop the mouths of gainsayers on this subject. Is it not usual to mark out the friends of salvation by grace, under the title of extraordinary strict, and eminent professors; generally, indeed, with a view to challenge the sincerity of that profession, and load it with obloquy and reproach? But consider, I pray you, with what propriety you give them the name of professors? what is it that they profess? It is, that they are nothing in themselves, and deserve nothing at the hand of God but wrath for their sins; that they have no hope of acceptance, but by the free grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ; that they can do nothing of themselves that is good, but, by the grace of God, are what they are; so that there is no room left for them to glory. Is not this their faith and persuasion? Why are they then called professors? You are the professors, who make your boast of the law, and glory in the excellence and perfection of human virtue. Shew us then your faith by your works; justify your profession by your practice; boasting will bring you little credit. But let us see who have the most sober, honest, holy, heavenly

lives; theſe are certainly actuated by the beſt principles.

But, I muſt, in part, retract what I have ſaid; for, after all, the ſervants of Chriſt are indeed profeſſors. They have taken on the holy profeſſion of the goſpel: and, in fact, any inſtance of irregular conduct in them is more obſerved, more deeply reproached, and gives greater offence than the very ſame in perſons of a different character. When they depart from their duty, and from ſtrictneſs of converſation, I give them freely up to the cenſures of their enemies; they have richly deſerved them, and therefore they ought to bear them. In the mean time, let me put thoſe in mind, who, in the midſt of their triumph, ſtigmatize them with the name of *profeſſors*, that they do them, or rather their profeſſion more honour than they are aware of; for they ſhew that they themſelves are ſenſible that ſuch principles ought to have produced holineſs in the converſation. So far as they reproach the ſinner, or the detected hypocrite, they do what is right, and it can ſcarcely be over-done. But, when they take occaſion to bring a reproach on the *profeſſion* itſelf, their very ſucceſs is a condemnation of themſelves; for that the groſs crimes of their own admirers are leſs offenſive, is juſt becauſe their *profeſſion* is leſs holy. Nothing would give me greater pain, than to underſtand that my doctrine were to the taſte of midnight rioters, ſwearers, and Sabbath breakers; and, if any ſuch are found among the admirers of moral preaching, their teachers could not do themſelves a greater honour, than by renouncing the connection.

4. Fidelity in declaring the whole *counsel of God*, implies preaching every truth in its proper season. "There is, as Solomon tells us, a time for every thing under the sun;" and, where the truths of the gospel are taught in their season, it gives them a particular lustre, as well as an uncommon force. That you may understand what I mean by preaching the truths of religion in their season, you may observe, that, besides giving with assiduity and care, the necessary instructions for every particular duty incumbent on persons, families, or congregations, the season may vary, and the propriety and necessity of insisting upon some truths, may arise from two circumstances;—the state of religion among a people;—and the aspect of providence towards them.

1st, It may arise from the state of religion among a people. Surely it is the duty of a minister to suit his instructions to the present and most pressing necessities of his hearers; not to foster their prejudices, but with care and judgment to correct them; not to pardon or overlook their prevailing errors, but to rectify them; not to bear with epidemic sins, but, with boldness and severity to reprove them. It will be seen, on the following head, that some of the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of ministers, and the strongest temptations to unfaithfulness, come from this quarter. At present I shall only shortly illustrate the observation, and support it by the practice of the apostles. We see that in speaking either to persons or churches, they took care to have a particular eye to their state and character, and adapted their instructions, and even their expressions, to these circumstances with the ut-

moſt fidelity, and the greateſt ſkill. Neither is there any way by which we can ſo well enter into the meaning of the ſcriptures, or perceive their beauty, as by conſidering the condition and characters of thoſe to whom the ſeveral parts of them are immediately addreſſed. We ſhall alſo ſee a mixture of zeal and prudence in the holy apoſtles, when acting under the direction of the Spirit of God. What an admirable example have we of propriety and fidelity in the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to Felix, the Roman governor, when he deſired to hear him concerning the faith of Chriſt? We are told, Acts xxiv. 25. that he took occaſion to "reaſon of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come." In ſpeaking to one who had probably no other intention in deſiring to hear him, than to gratify his curioſity, by obtaining a diſtinct account of the wonderful hiſtory of Chriſt, he thought proper to apply to all thoſe principles of natural conſcience which might be ſuppoſed yet to retain ſome power over him. And if (as many judicious interpreters think) inſtead of *temperance*, we ſhould read *continence*, it was a bold and ſevere, yet well timed reproof to him and Druſilla, who were then living in adultery. We cannot help alſo being ſtruck with the unſhaken boldneſs of the Apoſtle, who could ſpeak with ſo much freedom to the governor, in whoſe hands he was then as a priſoner, and before whom he expected ſoon to ſtand and receive ſentence from him as a judge.

You may alſo obſerve the apoſtle Paul's attention to, and concern for the particular ſtate of the churches to which he wrote his epiſtles. The church of

Corinth ſeems to have been greatly infeſted with diviſions and contentions, and theſe unhappily inflamed by ambitious and factious teachers, under whom they were marſhalled as ſo many leaders, and to whoſe name and intereſt they ſeem to have been more devoted, than even to thoſe of their Maſter, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and ſtrife, and diſſions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For, while one ſaith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Againſt this the Apoſtle writes with the greateſt zeal and warmth, and at the ſame time with the greateſt prudence. He ſhews how inconſiſtent it was with the ſpirit of the goſpel, and how derogatory to the honour of Chriſt. He endeavours to make them ſenſible, that the moſt able and faithful miniſters were no more than inſtruments in his hand, and owed their ſucceſs entirely to the bleſſing of God accompanying their labours, as in the ſame chapter, ver. 5, 6, 7. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe." What deſerves particular notice is, that in all probability, the mention of himſelf and Apollos here was merely hypothetical, or to ſerve by way of example. The real heads of the parties in the Corinthian church, were other teachers than either Paul or Apollos, whom he did not chuſe to name, but ſtated his argument in this leſs offenſive and more convincing form. The truth is, there is

no diſorder in a church that is harder to deal with, than a ſpirit of contention. Other ſins may be reproved with ſeverity, and you will be ſuppoſed to be in the exerciſe of your duty when doing ſo; but this will not allow itſelf to be reproved, becauſe it will not confeſs itſelf to be a crime, and is therefore often exaſperated by the attempts to heal it. You may ſee ſometimes a man of ſtrife cover all under a flaming profeſſion of religion, and yet conduct it in ſuch a manner, that we may ſay of him as the ſervants of Nabal ſaid of their maſter, "He is ſuch a ſon of Belial, that a man cannot ſpeak to him."

I might produce many other examples from the holy ſcriptures; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew, that it is the duty of a miniſter to ſuit himſelf to the ſtate of religion among his people, by with-holding nothing that is profitable, but particularly inſiſting on what is moſt needful. If any of the truths of the goſpel are in danger of being neglected, if they are undermined by ſecret, or aſſaulted by open enemies, it is the duty of a miniſter to make frequent mention of them, leſt they ſhould be forgotten; and to ſupport and confirm them, that they may obtain acceptance. If any duty is in danger of falling into diſeſteem, and a falſe ſhame makes many decline the practice, a faithful miniſter ſhould ſtand forth an open and zealous advocate for its continuance. If any particular ſin, or ſins, prevail remarkably in a place, and appear to be gaining ground, it is the duty of a miniſter to beware of yielding to the ſtream, or ſeeking his own quiet by ſilence; on the contrary, he ought to double his diligence, and make the moſt reſolute and vigorous oppoſition to the incroaching

evil. Of all this, I ſuppoſe, you will clearly perceive both the meaning and the juſtice. Theſe circumſtances are the intimations of Providence, and point out, in the moſt ſignificant manner, not only what is a part of a miniſter's work in general, but alſo what is the immediate will of God as to his preſent duty.

2*dly*, The proper ſeaſon of inſiſting on particular truths may ariſe from the aſpect of providence towards the church in general, or a congregation, family, or perſon, in particular. You ſee the apoſtles conſtantly make uſe of the ſtate of the church in their time, the number and violence of its enemies, to excite the ſervants of Chriſt to vigilance, to exhort them to conſtancy, and to exerciſe them to patience. They alſo ſeem particularly attentive to teach their converts to make uſe of the conſolations of the goſpel with this view, Rom. viii. 18. "For I reckon, that the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us"—and the ſame chapter, verſes 35, 36, 37. "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt: ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? (As it is written, for thy ſake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as ſheep for the ſlaughter.) Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Impending calamities of ſuch an alarming nature that they ſpeak as it were of themſelves, and afford the nobleſt opportunities of awakening the attention, and moving the affections, of bringing the careleſs to conviction, and ſtirring up the holy to watchfulneſs.

In times of public danger too the ſelf-ſeeking miniſter throws off the maſk, and deſerts the cauſe, while the faithful who remain, are neceſſarily animated with uncommon zeal.

But a different aſpect of providence calls alſo for inſtruction in ſeaſon. In times of public quiet and ſecurity, there is the greateſt reaſon to dread, and, by conſequence, to guard againſt indifference and formality in religion, on the one hand, or unneceſſary contention about it on the other. When the profeſſion of the goſpel is at any rate ſafe, and in ſome degree profitable, the church is always incumbered with a dead weight of cuſtomary Chriſtians, who receive their religion from their fathers, and continue to tread, as it were, in the beaten path. It is no eaſy matter, to ſhake their ſecurity, when every outward circumſtance conſpires to increaſe it. And as the ſpiritual ſlumber takes hold, in ſome meaſure, even of thoſe who are alive unto God, it is no trifling taſk to exerciſe diſcipline, at once with prudence and with firmneſs, and to preſerve the life and power of religion, when every thing is ſtiffening into form. It is very eaſy, indeed, when there is a hard conflict between health and corruption, in the body of Chriſt, that is to ſay, in his viſible church, for one, or a few members, to pour out complaints againſt thoſe who govern it; to lay to the charge of miniſters thoſe abuſes which are the grief of their hearts; and all at once, to ſet about making a new model according to their own fancy. But I apprehend it is a much better, though a more difficult duty, to obey the Redeemer's counſel, to "be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things that remain and are

ready to die." Alas! how often do the new diſorders that break out in ſeparating ſocieties betray the naughty materials of which they are compoſed. They are much in the ſame way as the fool who ran away from his own ſhadow, but run where he would it was there as ſoon as he. They run away from the corruption of human nature, and they ſhall never be quit of it, becauſe they carry it with them.

There is one other temptation which I ſhall briefly mention, as almoſt inſeparable from a ſtate of outward quiet in the church of Chriſt. Thoſe, if I may ſpeak ſo, who keep their garments clean, as to the *ſins*, are ſcarcely able to bear up under the *trials* of the times. When they ſee one attempt after another, for the revival of truth and righteouſneſs, defeated by the ſtrength of corruption, they are in danger of impatience and fretfulneſs againſt providence, and ſometimes are even tempted to call in queſtion the reality of religion altogether; as if it did not meet with that ſupport and countenance, from the great Ruler, which they think is its due. But the moſt common danger is, that of falling into a deſpondent neglect of duty, of not doing what they ought, becauſe it has not hitherto had the effect which they deſire. In ſuch a caſe, no doubt, it is the duty of miniſters to fortify them, by giving proper views of the wiſdom and ſovereignty of Providence; by ſhewing the paths of God towards his church, in ancient times; and that theſe have, in every age, been the complaints and fears of good men, from the weakneſs of their faith, and the imperfection of their knowledge. It was the complaint of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxix. 4. "We are become a reproach to

our neighbours, a ſcorn and deriſion to them that are round about us." But it led him toprayer for the revival of religion, as well as the proſperity of his country, verſe 5, " How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry? for ever? ſhall thy jealouſy burn like fire?" and in the 8th and 9th verſes, " O remember not againſt us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies ſpeedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our ſalvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our ſins for thy name's ſake."

But the courſe of providence, toward the church in general, is not only to be obſerved and improved, but whatever is remarkable or ſingular, in particular congregations. I ſhall not dwell upon examples of this, becauſe it is my purpoſe to put it into practice, and by that means, to illuſtrate it in the application of this diſcourſe. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that thoſe truths or exhortations, which are founded on the viſible ſtate of providence, carry a degree of evidence and weight that is peculiar to themſelves. Known characters and ſcenes illuſtrate the deſcription, facilitate the application, and increaſe the conviction. I do not mean the expoſing of particular perſons, by the introduction of ſingle and recent facts. But if a miniſter is able with judgment and propriety, to reflect upon divine truth, by pointing out the evil conſequences of ſin in general, the cauſes of the prevalence of one ſin more than another, and the inſenſible changes that are produced in the manners of men, by the change of their outward condition, it is certainly his duty; and when the ſtate of his own people furniſhes the op-

portunity, if he would ſpeak the word in ſeaſon, he ought not to let it paſs.

To theſe obſervations I only add, that, in the whole courſe of private parochial duties, a faithful miniſter will ſpeak the truths of God in their proper ſeaſon. If in family viſitation, or private and perſonal admonition, he hath not a particular view, either to their character, as far as it is known, or their ſtate in providence, however excellent or important his inſtructions may be, in other reſpects, he declareth not the whole counſel of God. But if he is truly actuated by a deſire of being uſeful, and keeps this circumſtance in his eye, with what readineſs will he communicate inſtruction to the ignorant, conſolation to the diſtreſſed, and reproof to the obſtinate! He will recommend to the rich, humility and liberality; to all who are in poverty, patience and induſtry; to parents, aſſiduity in teaching and government; to children, obedience, attention, and ſubjection; and to ſervants, integrity and faithfulneſs in their truſt; or in the language of the Holy Ghoſt, as a wiſe ſervant, "he will give to every one his portion of meat in due ſeaſon."

5. In the laſt place, *declaring the whole counſel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel, honeſtly and boldly, without reſpect of perſons. I am perſuaded the apoſtle Paul, who was of himſelf ſo remarkable for an undaunted courage in his Maſter's cauſe, had this, amongſt other things in view, when he ſays, he had not *ſhunned* to declare the counſel of God. There are few temptations more dangerous to a miniſter, than the fear of man. Such is the malignant enmity of the wicked againſt the good, that

he may ſuffer injury from them in his name, his ſubſtance, and even his perſon. Againſt this danger our Saviour has warned his diſciples in the following paſſage, Luke xii. 4. "And I ſay unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear: fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." It is remarkable, that in the prayers recorded in ſcripture, as offered by the apoſtles for divine aſſiſtance in their ſacred office, as well as thoſe paſſages in which they aſk the prayers and interceſſion of their fellow Chriſtians, this circumſtance is almoſt never forgotten. Boldneſs and reſolution was what they ſaw they ſhould always ſtand in need of. Acts iv. 29. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy ſervants, that with all boldneſs, they may ſpeak thy word." Eph. vi. 18, 19. "Praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the ſpirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance and ſupplication for all ſaints: and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the myſtery of the goſpel."

The trials of the apoſtles were indeed in this reſpect uncommonly ſevere; but, even ſetting aſide the caſe of open perſecution, there is great reaſon for miniſters to guard againſt that fear of man which bringeth a ſnare. As their hearers are of all different ranks and degrees, they ought, with the utmoſt impartiality, to preach the duties incumbent upon, and reprove the ſins that cleave to men of every ſtation. As they ſpeak in the name of God, and carry a meſ-

ſage from the King of kings, they ought to do it with the dignity that becomes an ambaſſador from him. They ought not to be diſmayed at the preſence of the moſt high and mighty of their fellow ſinners, when they remember the continual preſence of him before whom "mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie." I know, my brethren, that there is a reſpect and deference due to men, according to their ſtation, and that a conſcientious Chriſtian will give them the ſubjection that belongs to their rank and authority in civil life, "not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake." But this does not hinder him, who watches for their ſouls, to give them faithful warning, and, where it is neceſſary to debar them from the ſeals of God's covenant, leſt they ſhould at once profane his ordinance, and ruin their own ſouls.

I ſay, and I pray you to attend to it, *ruin their own ſouls;* becauſe I know not a greater injury that can be done to the great, than that conſtant adulation that is paid to them, and that indulgence to their faults, which, by weakening the reproofs of conſcience, tends to hinder their repentance and reformation. I take this opportunity to ſay, that if eternity is of any moment the great are not to be envied but pitied. Some are hindered by intereſt, and ſome by fear, from dealing plainly and faithfully with them; and it is wonderful to think how much the opinions and conduct of others blinds them as to the ſtate of their own ſouls. It is recorded, to the honour of an ancient biſhop, that for an act of cruelty he debarred the emperor himſelf from the Lord's table. I know there are many who would pronounce this immedi-

ately, the act of an ambitious and aſſuming prieſt; but it will always be in my eyes, a revered example of honeſty and faithfulneſs in a miniſter of Chriſt.

II. I proceed, now, to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to conſider the difficulties which may lie in a miniſter's way, and tempt him to *ſhun* any part of his work. Theſe are very various, and not eaſy either to enumerate or deſcribe. What hath generally made the greateſt impreſſion upon me, either from experience or obſervation, I ſhall dwell upon a little; it may be reduced to the three following heads,——Sloth or worldlineſs in ourſelves,—the prejudices of our people,—and the oppoſition of our enemies.

1. Sloth or worldlineſs in miniſters themſelves, may tempt them to ſhun ſome part of their work. You will ſee from the preceding obſervations, that the work of a miniſter is both extenſive and difficult. It requires the greateſt intention of mind, the application, ſo to ſpeak, of the whole man. It requires judgment to lay down the plan, diligence and perſeverance to carry it into execution. Now ſlothfulneſs, and a love of eaſe or pleaſure, to which we have all too great a bias, muſt be a very dangerous temptation; to evade ſome part of the duty, or ſlur it over in a ſlight or careleſs manner. There is a very great difference between doing our work in ſome ſort, or ſo as to avoid puniſhment from our ſuperiors, eſpecially at a time when the reins of government are not held very hard, and doing it with that zeal and application which a concern for the glory of God, and love to the ſouls of men, ſhould

habitually inſpire. We have all reaſon to be aſhamed, that the important objects we have in view, and the intereſting ſubjects we have to treat of, do not put an edge upon our ſpirits, and deliver us from that lazy unconcerned manner, which is equally diſhonourable to God, and hurtful to the ſouls of men. I take the liberty to obſerve, that ſlothfulneſs is very incident to perſons of conſiderable abilities; inſtead of being excited to improve their talents, they are inclined to truſt to them. Finding, by experience, that they can do tolerably with but little pains, they ſoon come to content themſelves with next to none. Perhaps I might apply here the common obſervation, that as few know their own weakneſs, ſo as few know their own ſtrength, or what they might do by the conſcientious improvement of their natural powers. We have ſeen many examples of perſons of weak capacity, who, by the help of piety and diligence, have done every part of their miniſterial duty in a manner far ſuperior to thoſe of much greater talents, whoſe heart did not lie to their work.

The danger of ſloth, as a temptation, will appear in the ſtrongeſt light, from what has been ſaid on the fidelity of a miniſter in declaring *all* the counſel of God. He may not only deal with a ſlack hand and do his work imperfectly; but as it conſiſts of very different parts, he may chuſe the eaſier, and leave the harder. He may apply chiefly to what is moſt pleaſant to himſelf, or what gives him the greateſt opportunity to ſhine in the eyes of others, while he neglects thoſe parts that are more burdenſome to the fleſh. The danger of this is the greater, that

thoſe parts of a miniſter's work, to which a ſlothful mind is uſually moſt reluctant, are alſo thoſe, the neglect of which can be moſt eaſily palliated or concealed. And, indeed, it is wonderful to think what ingenious excuſes men will invent for the neglect of thoſe duties which they have no inclination to perform. I have often heard miniſters endeavour to prove that viſitation of families, which doubtleſs is a very fatiguing, was alſo a very unprofitable and unneceſſary piece of ſervice, than which, I think, there never was any thing more manifeſtly falſe. It is not only, when executed with fidelity, of great immediate uſe in itſelf, but, by giving a miniſter a thorough knowledge of his people, enables him to perform every other part of his work with the greater propriety and ſucceſs. A miniſter ought to be like a ſervant, wholly at his maſter's diſpoſal, who has no choice as to his work, but is ready to obey what God in his providence ſhall ſee fit to command him.

I joined worldlineſs with ſloth, becauſe they are near of kin, and commonly co-operate one with another. It is not my intention, in any part of this reaſoning, to point out thoſe who are wholly unfaithful, and mean no more but to ſhear the fleece, without caring for the flock; but to ſhew how thoſe ſinful diſpoſitions, which, in part, take place in every one of us, if they be ſuffered to gather ſtrength, may obſtruct us in our duty. Too many worldly cares, or too much indulgence of worldly pleaſure, muſt be a very dangerous temptation to thoſe who are entruſted with the care of ſouls. The apoſtle Paul ſays of himſelf, that he was "ſeparated to the goſpel

of God," ſo is every miniſter of Chriſt. A prudent attention to his neceſſary proviſion, indeed, and ordering his affairs with diſcretion, is not only lawful, but highly uſeful and expedient; as it frees him from anxiety, and gives him greater liberty of mind for proſecuting the ends of his calling. But for one appointed to labour in holy things, to be either fordidly covetous, or from intereſted ambitious views to follow worldly occupations, is certainly either a ſacrilegious breach of truſt, or an unreaſonable and offenſive diſtruſt of God.

2. Another very great difficulty, which often lies in the way of a miniſter, ariſes from the prejudices of his people. It would be idle to ſuppoſe, that ever we ſhall find a people, among whom there are no miſtaken notions, or unjuſt prepoſſeſſions, which it is our duty, with prudence, but at the ſame time with honeſty, to withſtand. As no congregation can expect to meet with a perfect miniſter; ſo no miniſter ſhould expect to meet with a faultleſs congregation. If there were any ſuch, there would be little need of a miniſter at all. You are to obſerve, that I do not here chiefly intend that bias and propenſity to ſin, which is natural to us all, which reigns in the wicked, and ſtruggles for indulgence in the good; and which therefore calls for "doctrine, reproof, and correction, and inſtruction in righteouſneſs;" though I muſt obſerve, that even with regard to this, when any ſin is common and prevalent in a place, when it has long kept poſſeſſion, and has been generally overlooked, if a miniſter ſees it his duty to reprove it with ſeverity, and eſpecially, if he will not tolerate it without cenſure,

he may expect no little difficulty and oppoſition. There are many who will complain of him, as too rigid, and impute to ill-nature and indiſcretion, what ariſes from the dictates of conſcience, and a ſenſe of duty. By bearing open teſtimony againſt the introduction of faſhionable amuſements, or conformity to the world, he will often incur not only the hatred of the profligate, but the diſapprobation of thoſe prudent compliers, who are at once aſhamed to approve, and unwilling to oppoſe any ſinful relaxation.

But what I had chiefly in view, was, to mention thoſe prejudices that may prevail with regard to religion; and which may be of ſuch a nature, as a miniſter may be under a neceſſity not only of refuſing to comply with, but of oppoſing in the moſt direct and poſitive manner. If any error or miſtake of conſequence prevail, either among his people in general, or any part of them, either among the high or the low, the learned or the vulgar, he muſt endeavour to deſtroy it. There may be indeed prejudices of ſo trifling a nature, that though he will never approve them, it is better entirely to overlook them; or in things that are merely indifferent, though unneceſſary, according to the apoſtolic example, of "becoming all things to all men," it may be his duty ſometimes to comply with them. But this is not the caſe with any thing that affects the ſubſtance of religion, as to all which, if he attempt to pleaſe men, he is not the ſervant of Chriſt. Now, how great a difficulty muſt often ariſe from ſuch circumſtances! He is unwilling to loſe his place in the eſteem and affection of his people in general, but eſpecially of thoſe whom he reckons to be the diſ-

ciples and friends of Chriſt. Yet this he muſt ſometimes forfeit for a ſeaſon, unleſs he will ſin againſt God, and thereby deſtroy his own peace. The beſt way for a miniſter to ſupport himſelf in ſuch a ſituation, is, to remember, that as to his integrity before God, and the comfort of his own mind, the leſs regard he pays to the judgment of men, ſo much the better; if God be for him, it ſignifies little who be againſt him. And as to his uſefulneſs, he may ſafely commit it to God in his providence, who will certainly take care of it. Since he will not have it preſerved by ſinful compliance, he can eaſily reſtore it after it hath been a ſhort time ſuſpended for conſcientious oppoſition. The truth is, an unſteady perſon, ſhaken by the breath of popular opinion, is unworthy of filling the ſtation of a miniſter of Chriſt. As he ſhould not be terrified by the threatenings of the great, neither ſhould he be overcome by the clamours of the multitude. And if neither humour nor intereſt, but conſcience, has indeed been his guide, he may reſt aſſured that God, infinitely wiſe, will "bring forth his righteouſneſs as the light, and his judgment as the noon day."

My brethren, I thank God, that I ſpeak this from a conviction of the general truth, more than from having ſuffered much in this reſpect in my own experience. I ſhall mention to you, however, one example, that I may illuſtrate the remark, and, at the ſame time, further to diſcharge my own duty. It hath always ſeemed to me of great moment, to preſerve juſt views of the ſacraments, which are the ſeals of God's covenants, and the appointed means

of the confirmation and comfort of his own people. Without mentioning, however, the ſacraments of the Lord's ſupper, I have found the greateſt difficulty in preſerving the ſacrament of baptiſm from profanation, and from that comparative diſregard under which it now lieth. This ariſes not only from the laxneſs of diſcipline in general, but from ſome miſtakes and prejudices on the ſubject of religion. It appears to me a thing undeniable, that both ſacraments are the ſeals of the ſame covenant, require the ſame terms of admiſſion, and operate to the benefit of the receivers upon the very ſame principles; that is to ſay, according to the excellent words of our Catechiſm, "Not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth adminiſter them, but only by the bleſſing of God, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them." The only difference is, that, in the Lord's ſupper, every believer acts for himſelf perſonally; in the ſacrament of baptiſm, when adminiſtered to infants, the parent acts as a repreſentative, and ſponſor for his ſeed. None, therefore, ought to be admitted to baptiſm, more than to the Lord's ſupper, who have not a credible profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and, in the judgment of charity, or rather the judgment of men, may be ſuppoſed real Chriſtians. Yet, is it not certain, that many who are juſtly excluded from the Lord's table, and ſome who never aſked admiſſion to it, do inſiſt on preſenting their children to baptiſm, and are pleaded for by not a few of better character, who cry out againſt the refuſal, as an injury to the child, beſides other bad conſequences ſometimes pretended?

The chief complaint is, that it is a pity the child ſhould ſuffer for the fault of the father. This is the very error and prejudice in religion, which I think it my duty to oppoſe. It ariſes from a remaining degree of Popiſh ſuperſtition, to look upon the ſacraments as ſpells, or charms, which have ſome effect independent of the exerciſe of faith in the receiver. The ſacraments, my brethren, are not grace, but the means of it; they are not faith, but are appointed for the confirmation and growth of it. They belong to believers alone. They are ſeals of God's covenant; but they cannot ſeal that which was never made. It is juſt as if a man, who wanted to make a purchaſe from me, whoſe terms I had utterly rejected, and refuſed to give him my poſſeſſion, ſhould, notwithſtanding, perſiſt in writing out his contract, and ſigning it. Would this be of any effect? A contract is a ſure title to the bargain, where the conſent of both parties is aſcertained; but where one of theſe is wanting, it is abſolutely void, and of no effect. Infants cannot receive the ſacraments, by exerciſing faith themſelves; they have no right to receive the ſign at all, but as they are the ſeed of believing parents by profeſſion. Neither do they receive any real benefit from it, but when they are the ſeed of thoſe who believe ſincerely. If it be allowed, that an unbeliever, who receives the bread and wine at the Lord's table, receives no benefit to his own ſoul, how can it be imagined or ſuppoſed, that an unbelieving parent in baptiſm can firſt receive, and then convey benefit to his new born child? His coming there at all, in ſuch a ſtate, is a preſumptuous profanation of a holy inſtitution. Now,

though I can conceive eaſily, and do believe firmly, that many bleſſings are conveyed to children by an act of duty in their parents, I can neither conceive nor believe, that they can receive any advantage from an act of profanity and diſobedience.

The children of wicked parents, then, can receive no benefit by baptiſm, but what they would have whether they were baptiſed or not, viz. that they are brought up among profeſſing Chriſtians, and by that means have ſome opportunities of knowing the truths of the goſpel. And I cannot help thinking it would, in the courſe of providence, be an inducement to them to attend more ſeriouſly to what they are taught, if they conſidered themſelves as no members of the viſible church, till they underſtood the terms of admiſſion, and deſired it as their own choice. The caſe is very different with the children of real believers; they have a right to all the promiſes that are made to the ſeed of believers as ſuch, by that God who "ſheweth mercy to thouſands of generations of them that keep his commandments." Some, I believe many, think that they are doing honour to the ſacrament of baptiſm, by repreſenting the rite itſelf as of ſo great neceſſity; but it is preciſely that ſort of honour that the Papiſts do to it, by cauſing midwives and phyſicians inſtantly baptize the children that are in a weak ſtate, or by running to the beds of the ſick, with a little of the conſecrated wafer, and putting it into the mouth of a perſon either wholly inſenſible, or perhaps already dead. Our fathers in the purer times of this church, whoſe inſtitutions and practice, the longer I live I do the more eſteem and revere, in the moſt abſolute

manner, prohibited all private baptiſm. Their great reaſon for this was to prevent the very abuſe I have been ſpeaking of, viz. the ſuperſtitious notion of the neceſſity of the outward rite to ſalvation, without a due attention to the manner of receiving it. And, indeed, it was their only reaſon; for they who were ſo great enemies to the conſecration of places, and the holineſs of ſtones or timber, could never think that baptiſm, adminiſtered according to Chriſt's appointment, was invalid for being done in a private houſe, and not in a church, or in the preſence of a ſmall rather than a numerous aſſembly.

Theſe things, my brethren, which I have often mentioned occaſionally, I have now repeated, and will add to them, that I think there is ſomething very incongruous, at leaſt unſuitable, in admitting any parent to preſent his child in baptiſm, whatever be his character in other reſpects, who has never aſked admiſſion to the Lord's table. Conſider, that in the adminiſtration of baptiſm, the parent is conſtantly taken bound to command his children, ſo ſoon as they come to years, to renew their baptiſmal engagement in their own perſons. Now what conſiſtency is there, in allowing a man to pledge his faith ſolemnly to God and his church, that he will command his child to do that which he habitually neglects to do himſelf. The pretence of fear, and unpreparedneſs for the Lord's table, is a condemnation of thoſe who offer it, becauſe it ſhews, that they ſuppoſe the one ſacrament requires a different character, or eaſier terms of admiſſion than the other. After all, the above prejudices ſeem to

me ſo deeply rooted with many, that they will not probably be ſoon deſtroyed; but I think it is the duty of every miniſter, in that, and all ſuch caſes, to ſpeak his mind plainly, and, to the utmoſt of his power, to act conſiſtently and uniformly, though he ſhould ſuffer by the ſlanders both of the ignorant and profane.

3. The laſt difficulty which I ſhall mention, as lying in the way of miniſters, is the oppoſition of their enemies. No faithful miniſter can expect to be without enemies. In a private character, and retired way of life, a man may, by very great prudence, and particularly by ſilence and forbearance, in a great meaſure, eſcape the reſentment or injuries of violent men. And to be as little embroiled with others as poſſible, is both our intereſt and our duty. "If it be poſſible, ſays the Apoſtle, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." But it is certain, from long and invariable experience, that there is ſuch enmity and rancour in the hearts of wicked men againſt all who are in good earneſt about religion, that they may lay their account with continual oppoſition, and continual ſlander. This our Saviour teaches his diſciples to expect, and ſhews them, that it is the neceſſary conſequence of their relation to him, John xv. 18, 19, 20, 21. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I ſaid unto you, The ſervant is not greater than the Lord. If they have perſecut-

ed me, they will alſo perſecute you. If they have kept my ſaying, they will keep yours alſo. But all theſe things will they do unto you for my name's ſake, becauſe they know not him that ſent me."—The apoſtle Paul alſo bears his teſtimony to the ſame truth, 2 Tim. iii. 12. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, will ſuffer perſecution."

But, if wicked men are injurious to the children of God in general, their malice muſt be particularly whetted againſt a miniſter, ſo far as he does his duty. He is placed in a public ſtation, and is obliged to be active in his Maſter's cauſe. Time-ſerving or neutrality, as to the intereſt of religion, is commendable in none, but it is unpardonable in him. He muſt bear teſtimony openly and reſolutely againſt vice and wickedneſs. And reproof, when adminiſtered with ſeverity, is certain of making either a friend or an enemy. A faithful miniſter will not ſuffer Satan's kingdom to be at peace; and, therefore, it is no wonder, that when they are gnawing their tongues with pain, they ſhould pour out their venom againſt him, who gives them ſo much diſturbance. The effect of reproof, in kindling the rage and malice of the guilty, was never better deſcribed than in the account of the trial and martyrdom of Stephen, particularly Acts vii. 54. "When they heard theſe things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnaſhed on him with their teeth."

There are many ways by which the enmity and oppoſition of wicked men to the truth may prove a temptation to a miniſter: a few of which I ſhall mention, as I hope the diſtinct knowledge of them

may be profitable to you in the way of caution: *1ſt*, As one of their chief weapons is contempt and deriſion, he may be in danger of concealing or perverting truth in ſome degree, in order to avoid it. When the goſpel of Chriſt was firſt publiſhed, the doctrine of the croſs, we are told, was "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs." The ſame truth, in its ſimplicity, is ſtill treated with ſcorn by profane and worldly men. All that relates to it is conſidered as weakneſs and abſurdity; and the miniſter who inſiſts upon it, muſt loſe his character with many for capacity and judgment. Is not this known to be true in daily experience? Are not ſuch immediately ſtigmatized as weak and babbling creatures? Now, it is not altogether an eaſy ſacrifice for a miniſter, to be indifferent as to the opinion formed of his parts and ſufficiency, to wait till time ſhall do him juſtice, or to be altogether unconcerned whether it ever do him juſtice or not. It is no trifling thing to become *a fool* in the eye of the world *for Chriſt's ſake*, and *not to be aſhamed of his croſs*. It may make many avoid ſuch ſubjects, at leaſt, more than they ought, or, perhaps, attempt to give them a polite or modiſh dreſs, which of all others, is the moſt unſuitable to them; or it may make others go to the oppoſite extreme, who, becauſe they find that ſuch truths will be deſpiſed, are at no pains to avoid adding to the offence, by a ſilly and contemptible, or a crude and indigeſted manner of handling them. I know not indeed a more difficult thing, nor do I know any thing more noble in a miniſter, than to "ceaſe from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils," to be truly ſuperior

to the applauſe or cenſure of either one claſs or another of his hearers, and therefore to avoid a vain diſplay of human art; but at the ſame time, from a ſenſe of duty to God, and veneration for his truths, to be at all due pains to treat them properly, ſo as they may appear with light and evidence to the underſtanding, and come home with force upon the conſcience. Such a man will bring forth the doctrines of the goſpel in their own unadorned majeſty and native ſimplicity; he will not conſider himſelf as preaching *before* his hearers as critics: for what are they to him in this view? but he will conſider himſelf as preaching *to* them as ſinners, and pleading with them as immortal creatures, tottering upon the very brink of eternal perdition.

2*dly*, The oppoſition of enemies may tempt men of little courage to ſinful ſilence for their own quiet. When vice is prevalent, it is alſo commonly inſolent and reſentful. Now, the hatred or ill-will of no perſon is deſirable; and there are a thouſand ways in which any perſon of a revengeful ſpirit may be hurtful. There are alſo very few ſo unconnected, but that they have many friends, whoſe hatred is to be encountered as well as their own. The influence of this is but too much ſeen in every place. Offenders are often ſcreened from reproof or cenſure, thro' fear of provoking them or their relations. Neither is it at all difficult to find palliating arguments drawn from prudence, or other conſiderations, to make us think it is neceſſary to forbear. I believe this is very much the fault of the preſent age, and the greater and more general the relaxation of diſcipline in any age or place, the more difficult and danger-

ous it is for any one to ſtep forth and aſſert its dignity and obligation. And yet I cannot help thinking, the great excellence of diſcipline, is its impartiality, not to reſpect perſons in judgment. How can we defend ourſelves, if we make one law for one, and another for another; if we cenſure the ſmall and forgive the great?

3*dly*, Miniſters of weak minds may be apt to ſink under the oppoſition of the wicked. It is ſaid of Lot dwelling in Sodom, that he was, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8. "Vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." It certainly needs no ſmall meaſure of fortitude and holy reſolution, to perſiſt in the diſcharge of our duty, notwithſtanding the obſtinacy of ſinners, and to ſeek our comfort, under continual obloquy, from the approbation of him that judgeth righteouſly. At the ſame time, I muſt ſay that the friendſhip of wicked men is much more dangerous than their enmity; for the firſt brings with it the danger of ſeduction, and the laſt only expoſes us to ſuffering, which, though itſelf is a ſpecies of temptation, as I ſhall immediately ſhew, is much leſs powerful than the other.

4*thly*, The oppoſition of wicked men may prove a temptation, as it may bring forth the remains of corruption that are in the hearts of good men, and make them ſin, by imprudence or paſſion, if not by reſentment. I have no where ſuppoſed that miniſters are faultleſs in their conduct; they may, no doubt, err conſiderably in many circumſtances, even

when their intention, upon the whole, is juſt and laudable. We ſee many examples of great imprudence, which we need not wonder at, when we conſider the difficulties with which they are every where ſurrounded, and the enemies that wait for their halting. If we conſider that Moſes, the meekeſt man on earth, ſpoke unadviſedly with his lips upon great provocation, we ſhall perceive it is but a part of the weakneſs of humanity, when we ſee others fall into the ſame ſnare. But, as to laſting reſentment, he deſerveth not the name of a Chriſtian, much leſs of a miniſter, who will continue to harbour it in his breaſt; he muſt love his enemies; he muſt bleſs them that curſe him, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe him, and perſecute him. This is not merely a thing amiable and excellent, but of the moſt abſolute neceſſity; for our Saviour ſays expreſsly, "If ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your treſpaſſes." And, bleſſed be God, there is nothing difficult or burdenſome in this part of a Chriſtian's duty. There is no ſuch victory over evil, as overcoming it with good. There is no ſuch conſolation under the injuries of ſinners, as requiting them by prayer. It compoſeth the ſpirit; it purifieth the heart, and authoriſes the believer to put his truſt in God, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?"

III. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject; particularly,

by giving you my parting advices in the ſpirit of this paſſage, and to the beſt of my judgment, in a manner ſuited to your ſituation. But, before I do this, in the

1*ſt* Place, Let me beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to hearken to the meſſage of the goſpel, and to believe in the name of the Son of God, "that, believing, they may have life through his name." This is the ſubſtance of *the counſel of God*, "that Chriſt died on the croſs to ſave ſinners, and that there is no ſalvation in any other." You are bleſſed who hear the joyful ſound, but infinitely more bleſſed, if you lay it to heart, and, renouncing every other claim, reſt your dependance upon this Saviour. What ignorance doth it ſhew, if you truſt in yourſelves, that you are righteous? Will you be able to ſtand before God in judgment? It is to him you muſt anſwer, and from him you muſt receive your ſentence. You may eaſily, indeed, ſtifle theſe reflections for a time, and bury every apprehenſion, in the hurry of worldly buſineſs, or the intoxication of worldly pleaſure; but all theſe things are coming quickly to an end. After a few more turns in this vain world, the body muſt be laid in the duſt, and the ſpirit muſt go to its own place; that is to ſay, either the manſions of glory, or the place of torment. I ſay theſe things to you my brethren, with all plainneſs. They need no additional force of language to give them weight. It is an amazing proof of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that we are ever able to forget them. It is wonderful, indeed, that ſinners are able to ſleep in quiet, and to indulge themſelves in worldly pleaſure, while they are ſuſpended by nothing but the frail thread of life over

the bottomleſs pit. Gladly would I make uſe of every circumſtance that could have any effect in carrying home theſe truths upon the conſciences of all here preſent.

If that of my being now ſpeaking to you, for the laſt time, in all probability, while in the body, can be of any uſe, I pray, let it not be forgotten. But is it not ſtrange, that a circumſtance of this nature ſhould excite ſo much curioſity and attention, and things that happen every day, of the ſame or a like nature, ſhould be ſo little improved? It is not, indeed every day that a miniſter is removed from his charge; but there are not many days, in which ſome of his people are not removed from this ſtate of trial. Many are hearing a farewel ſermon, though not to the miniſter, yet to themſelves, when they little think of it. I would, therefore, earneſtly beſeech all who are, or have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves to be in an unreconciled ſtate, to turn from their tranſgreſſions, that they may live; to lay hold of the mercy of God through Chriſt, for their pardon; and live, by faith, on his promiſed ſtrength, for their ſanctification.

2*dly*, Notwithſtanding this general addreſs, I have a few words to ſay to the looſe and profligate. I am ſorry to think, that, in a place like this, of no very great extent, there ſhould be ſo many daring ſinners, who ſet every thing ſacred at defiance. It hath been obſerved, and I believe with truth, that the profane among us carry it with a greater degree of hardineſs and inſolence, than in places of ſuperior note, and where probably they are in much greater numbers. I believe it may be in part owing to this circumſtance, that they are better known; ſo

that they muſt either be open profligates, or not profligates at all. There is no medium; the ſhame cannot be avoided; and therefore it muſt be overcome, ſince they will not be reſtrained, and cannot be concealed, it lays them under an unhappy neceſſity of keeping profanity in countenance. Perhaps alſo another reaſon may be, that not being tied by any principle of conſcience, they are alſo deſtitute of that ſenſe of decency which has a conſiderable influence on the outward conduct of thoſe of higher rank. But whatever be the reaſon, their ſtate is to be pitied. Let me beſeech all ſuch, to conſider the terrible effects of vice which are every day to be ſeen. Remember, I pray you, how many have fallen a ſacrifice to drunkenneſs and luſt! Can you ſay deliberately, in a ſober moment, that there is any profit in your choice? Is there any pleaſure in reflecting on ſcenes of riot and diſſipation? I know not whether to recal to your memory thoſe whom death has taken away, or point out to your obſervation thoſe who are ſuffered to remain. What a melancholy ſight is an old worn out ſinner, who has broken his conſtitution, tainted his character, and waſted his ſubſtance! You let us ſee well enough in what manner you chuſe to live; but I would gladly know in what manner you chuſe, or indeed what manner you expect to die. You cannot live always. Some of you cannot live long. Suppoſe you had time given you for reflection on a death bed, or children to whom you would leave a few words of advice, could you ſay to them, "O! my dear children, the many delightful nights that I have ſpent in roaring, and ſwearing,

and obſcene jeſting! O the delicious hours that I have ſpent in brothels among harlots! It gives me pleaſure to think that you will follow ſo good an example, and revive the memory of your father's conduct. Guard againſt every thing that may tempt you to forſake it. Beware of thoſe cunning prieſts that would ſeduce you to religion!" Are ſuch ſentiments, my brethren, to the laſt degree inſupportable? Are they almoſt improper to deſcribe? What then muſt be the life that lays an evident foundation for them? Why are you ſo impatient of the reproofs or admonitions of thoſe who bleed inwardly for your folly? It is not inclination, but duty that prompts us. No man would provoke your rage and violence, if he could avoid it. Think then, I beſeech you, on your condition, and pray that God for Chriſt's ſake, may grant you repentance unto life.—The wicked having received warning,

I muſt now endeavour to execute what I chiefly intended in the cloſe of this diſcourſe, by giving you ſome advices as a people making profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and obedience to him. They will all, or moſt of them, conſiſt of what I have frequently taken notice of occaſionally, and have now only ſelected as matters of general moment.

1. Let me beſeech you to do your utmoſt to underſtand the goſpel well; but let it be always accompanied with practice, and applied to promote the power of the ſpiritual life. I would have your taſte exerciſed to diſcern good and evil. Endeavour by reading, hearing, and meditation, and you may add mutual converſe, to underſtand the doctrine of ſalvation by grace in all its parts. Learn to know

the meaning of forgiveneſs being free, viz. that the ſinner is juſtly liable to wrath; that Chriſt hath purchaſed, and God of his infinite unmerited mercy, has offered a full pardon to the chief of ſinners, and grace to form them for his own ſervice; that it is their duty to accept of it; that it is their intereſt to rely upon it, and that it is at their peril if they deſpiſe it; that, for a ſinner to think he muſt firſt do ſome things that are good, in order to found his title to this very mercy, is injurious to the riches of divine grace, and the way to retard, if not to prevent his reformation. The renewing of his nature is a part of Chriſt's purchaſe; and, therefore, not to be performed by him as a condition, but accepted as a promiſe; nor does he truly receive Chriſt for ſalvation, unleſs he receive and ſubmit to him in all the characters with which he is inveſted, as ſent of God, viz. Prophet, Prieſt, and King. Holineſs, or new obedience, is the fruit of faith. A real believer keeps the commandments of God by the ſtrength of that grace that is treaſured up in Chriſt, and watchfully obſerves his temper and practice, as the evidences of his change, and tending to ſhew that he is indeed an habitation of God through the Spirit. To have evangelical principles, is, by no means, to neglect the commandments of God; but to deny our own righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and obey, without glorying in that obedience. And that this is the juſt and ſcriptural view of the matter, I think, is undeniable, on this ſingle account, "that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleaſure." If every thing that is good in us is the work of God, it is abſurd to repreſent it as

the condition of his favour; for it is the effect of his grace. By ſetting the thing in this light, we ſhall perceive, that the freeneſs of ſalvation is not in the leaſt degree giving liberty to ſin, or taking away the neceſſity of holineſs. Is it not juſt as neceſſary, if it muſt be received as a gift, as if it were to be performed as a condition? Is it not juſt as neceſſary when incorporated with faith, as when divided from it?

This ſyſtem of goſpel truth, my brethren, I would have you to underſtand, ſo as both to diſcern and diſapprove what is contrary to it; but I would have you to underſtand it, in order to produce union with God, habitual and cheerful obedience to his laws. In recommending the connection between faith and practice, I mean to guard you againſt two things diſtant from one another. The one is habitual untenderneſs of conſcience. There are certainly ſome who are either real, or at leaſt pretended friends to the doctrine of the goſpel, on whoſe hearts it never yet hath taken hold. They plainly and habitually live in the practice of ſin, and therefore are of thoſe who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. I am indeed of opinion, that they never had any other than a cuſtomary traditionary belief. They are ſound becauſe it is the mode where they live to be ſound, and not from any inward perſonal conviction. In the mean time, they are a reproach to their profeſſion, and cannot be treated with too great ſeverity by thoſe who wiſh well to the goſpel.

The other miſtake I would guard you againſt is, a ſpeculative religion. It is good to be well inſtructed in doctrinal truths; but there is often a

danger of going too much into controverſy. We have ſeen many inſtances of ordinary Chriſtians who, when they had attained a conſiderable degree of knowledge, and were able to ſpeak with fulneſs and propriety on religious ſubjects, gave themſelves up to a litigious and wrangling diſpoſition, which was ſoon followed by a barren, and ſometimes an offenſive practice. The ſame thing alſo frequently leads to innumerable little parties and factions, into which Chriſtians, I mean real Chriſtians, are divided, which very much hinder their own profit, and grieve the hearts of thoſe who are one with them in Chriſt. Therefore let it be your care to apply the truths of the goſpel for your own ſanctification and comfort. After you have believed them, be ſtill more careful to live upon them, than even to defend them. Diviſions ſhould never be made without abſolute neceſſity; and when they are made, they ſhould be as ſoon as poſſible forgotten, that having eſcaped ſin we may apply ourſelves to duty; for controverſy, be the ſubject what it will, I think, is not very favourable to the power of godlineſs.

2. Deſire a faithful miniſter, do your utmoſt to obtain him; and then let it be your habitual ſtudy to profit by him. You have reaſon to be very thankful, that your ſituation in providence is ſuch, as you may expect a miniſter who is a hearty friend to the goſpel, and at the ſame time, one who is agreeable to your own choice. Let me exhort you, as far as you are conſulted in that matter, to make the choice with much calmneſs and prudence; to look for one not only ſound in his principles, but of thorough knowledge and capacity, always preferring ſolid before ſpecious parts. After having made the choice,

endeavour to ſtrengthen his hands, and encourage his heart in the Lord, by a careful attendance on his miniſtry, and by a dutiful ſubmiſſion to inſtruction and reproof. You ought not to wiſh for one who will flatter you, nor ought you to lay ſuch a temptation in a miniſter's way, as to ſhew that you are pleaſed with being flattered. The beſt teſtimony that you can give to a miniſter is to learn from him, and to obey him. This is infinitely better than noiſy praiſe and admiration, according to the excellent remark of biſhop Burnet, "That it is not the beſt ſermon that makes the hearers go away talking to one another, and praiſing the ſpeaker; but that which makes them go away thoughtful, and ſerious, and haſtening to be alone." Has a miniſter any evidently profane perſons among his hearers? if he cannot preach them from ſin to God, it were much more for his credit to preach ſo as that they are not able to hear him, but flee away for eaſe to their conſcience, than to have them continue in wickedneſs, and yet praiſe him every day, for an admirable ſpeaker or an able man.

If you would truly profit by ordinances, after you have a fixed paſtor, I think it is of moment to forget, as much as poſſible, the perſons of men, and conſider them as no more than inſtruments in the hand of God, for your daily inſtruction and comort. The more you remember the appointment of God, and wait upon his ordinances, in the faith of his preſence, and the expectation of his bleſſing, the more you are likely to receive both ſenſible and laſting benefit. I muſt therefore take the liberty to obſerve, that we have amongſt us a ſet of wandering unſettled hearers, who run about from one

congregation to another, and even from one profeſſion to another, and are ſcarcely ever to be ſeen a whole day in one place. If they be but deliberating where to fix, we may ſay of them, that they are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. But the probability is, that they have itching and curious ears, and go about not to ſerve God but to hear men. If I am able at all to judge, either by reflection or obſervation, thoſe are moſt likely to profit, who having deliberately made their choice, ſit habitually and regularly under one miniſter. By this means they enter into his views; and as he will naturally endeavour, if any thing was wanting at one time, to complete his ſcheme by ſupplying it at another, they will thereby have a more comprehenſive view of the whole counſel of God. At the ſame time, not having the charm of novelty to enchant them, they will have nothing to do but to reap inſtruction. On the other hand, by hearing ſeparate, detached, and independent diſcourſes, men may pleaſe their fancy more, but they will improve their underſtanding leſs. It is alſo plain, that as every miniſter will endeavour, not only to follow an order in his diſcourſes on one ſubject, but to have a reſpect to the connection, and relation of the ſubjects themſelves, the more accurate and exact he is, in ſuiting one part to the illuſtration of another, the leſs he will be underſtood by theſe deſultory hearers, who take only a ſingle branch, without being able to perceive its ſubſerviency to the general deſign. I have many times known exceptions taken at miniſters, for ſome parts of a diſcourſe by ſuch perſons, when, if they had

heard the whole upon the ſame or correſponding ſubjects, they would have perceived there was no place for their objections. The great purpoſe, my brethren, of a ſerious and judicious people, in attending on ordinances, ſhould neither be to pleaſe themſelves, nor to criticiſe their teachers; but to hear the word of God, that they may do it. On this account it is, that humble and regular Chriſtians are getting real advantage to their ſouls, while ſome are only watching the opinions, or others only paſſing judgment on the ability, perhaps no more than the ſtyle and outward manner of the ſpeaker.

3. I muſt give you another advice, as a profeſſing people, to guard againſt the introduction of a worldly ſpirit. I have often obſerved to you, that every ſituation a perſon or people can be in has its peculiar temptations, as well as trials. This place, engaged in commerce and traffic, growing in numbers, and I ſuppoſe growing in wealth, is in great danger of a worldly ſpirit, and of importing, if I may ſpeak ſo, faſhionable vices, inſtead of real improvements. While I ſay this, I would not be underſtood as being againſt a liberal education, and elegant manner of life, or any thing that is truly becoming in an advanced rank. There is no more religion in being ſordid, than in being ſumptuous. But I think the ſpirit of the goſpel is ſuch, that it will diſpoſe a truly pious perſon to be rather late than early in adopting new ornaments; rather ſparing than exceſſive in dreſs, furniture and equipage; and careful not to be conformed to that vanity of the world which we renounced at baptiſm. Let men defend one practice after another, as they pleaſe, I ſhall always

expect to see something which a careless worldly person will do, but which a good man will not do.

However, not to keep entirely in generals, I must once more give my public testimony against what was lately attempted to be brought in here, equally contrary to the law of the land and the precepts of the gospel, the pernicious entertainments of the stage. The best and wisest men in all ages have borne witness against them, as the great means of corrupting the morals of a people; and I am certain, they must be of all others most hurtful to the inhabitants of this place, the far greatest part of whom live by daily labour. I look upon it as the indispensible duty both of magistrates and ministers, to do all in their power, to prevent the introduction of what may betray the young and unsuspicious into the destructive paths of vice, or the lower class of mankind into an idle and dissolute life. Much good of this kind may be done in matters of outward order, by a firm and resolute behaviour in those who are in place and authority. I must also here take particular notice of the duty of sabbath sanctification. I do hereby warn you against that most pernicious refinement of gadding abroad, paying private visits upon the Lord's day. Whoever knows any thing of the obligation of family government and instruction, must be sensible, that to receive promiscuous company on that day, is to render it utterly impracticable. Besides, the vain and unprofitable, and sometimes sinful conversation that prevails in such cases, must greatly weaken, or entirely obliterate any serious impressions made upon your mind, during the service of the sanctuary. Christians, is not the

reſt of the ſabbath from worldly cares and purſuits, a conſolation to your own ſouls, as well as a happy opportunity of doing ſervice to the ſouls of others? Why then will you ſuffer yourſelves to be robbed of it, by the impertinent intruſions of idle or ill diſpoſed perſons? Let your houſes be ſacred on that day as well as your churches; and endeavour to prepare your own minds, and thoſe of the other members of your families, for an eternal ſabbath in the world to come. This leads me, in the

4th Place, To exhort you to be careful and conſcientious in family government and inſtruction. How inexcuſable are thoſe parents and maſters, who ſuffer their children and ſervants to periſh for lack of knowledge? What unſpeakable advantages do you enjoy, having all the force of natural affection, as well as natural authority, to give your inſtructions weight? How many have remembered, with pious gratitude, through a whole life, the benefit they have received from family inſtruction and example? I know I ſpeak to many who are accountable to God for this mercy; how ſhall you anſwer it then, if you do not give the ſame advantage to your own families? and how ſhall they anſwer to God, think you, who have baniſhed the worſhip of God from the families in which they found it? One would think, the lifeleſs walls and furniture of your chambers might be awakening monitors. There is the greateſt mutual influence between family and perſonal religion. Perſonal religion is the foundation of all family and relative duties. It would be ſpeaking to the deaf to perſuade any to watch over the ſouls of others, who have no concern for their own. But

wherever there is a deep impreſſion of the importance of eternity for ourſelves, this will naturally and neceſſarily ſet before us its importance with reſpect to all that are dear to us. On the other hand, for the ſame reaſon, family religion is one of the beſt and ſureſt evidences of the reality and the ſtrength of perſonal religion. It is ſometimes obſerved, that ſome very pious perſons are extremely defective in this particular, and take little care of the inſtruction, and ſtill leſs of the government, of their children. If they are truly pious, it is a very great blemiſh upon their piety. However, for my own part, I confeſs I do very much ſuſpect the ſincerity of religion, in thoſe who are remarkably negligent in this particular, let them profeſs as much as they will. I know that pious perſons, from the weakneſs of their judgment, will be guilty of great imprudence in the manner of family inſtruction, and from an abſolute incapacity, may not be able to preſerve their authority; but I cannot eaſily reconcile with true piety, the abſolute neglect of either the one or the other.

I muſt add, that I take family religion, and the careful diſcharge of relative duties, to be an excellent mean of the growth of religion in a man's own ſoul. How can any perſon bend his knees in prayer every day with his family, but it muſt be a powerful reſtraint upon him from the indulgence of any ſin which is viſible to them? Will ſuch a perſon, think you, dare to indulge himſelf in anger, or chuſe to be ſeen by them, when he comes home ſtaggering with drunkenneſs, unfit to perform any duty, or ready to ſin ſtill more by the manner of performance? When I figure to myſelf a maſter of a family, who

had come home ſotted like a beaſt, and half-ſupported to his houſe, riſing in the morning, I am not able to conceive how he can bear the looks of thoſe members of his family who had been witneſſes of his ſhame. But, beſides being a reſtraint from groſs crimes, I cannot help ſaying, that, ſpeaking of the things of God, with the concern of a parent, or the humanity of a maſter, muſt give a ſolemnity of ſpirit, and a ſenſe of their moment, even greater than before. A man cannot ſpeak to purpoſe, without feeling what he ſays; and the new impreſſion will certainly leave behind it a laſting effect. Let me therefore, my beloved hearers, earneſtly recommend to you the faithful diſcharge and careful management of family duties, as you regard the glory of God, the intereſt of his church, the advantage of your poſterity, and your own final acceptance in the day of judgment.

5. Let religion be incorporated with your lawful employments, and improved by an attention to the whole courſe of providence to you and yours. Nothing is more hurtful to religion, than to confine it to particular times and places: I ſhould have rather ſaid, there is not a greater miſtake in religion, than to imagine that it can be ſo confined. True religion will ſhew its influence in every part of your conduct. It is like the ſap of a living tree, which penetrates to the moſt diſtant boughs. In your ordinary calling, ſee that you undertake nothing but what is lawful in its end, and endeavour to accompliſh nothing by any but by lawful means, that you may have always the comfort of a conſcience void of offence. Nay, you ſhould even do more; you ſhould

endeavour to act so single and sincere a part, as to be beyond the imputation of fraud, that all who know you may put the most unbounded confidence in your integrity. There are many other calumnies which we may naturally expect from a malicious world; and it ought to trouble us very little to hear them: but it must be extremely distressing to a good man to be but suspected of dishonesty. Oh, my brethren! how often hath it grieved me to see, that many persons, formerly of a decent character, when they lost their substance, lost their religion with it; and indeed, to consider how few, when they were reduced in their circumstances, could satisfy the public, that they had acted fairly.

Let it be your care, I beseech you, to remember, that it is God that giveth you power to get wealth; and what thanks are due to him, if he hath given you abundance, especially if he hath given you withal a heart to bestow. Be diligent in your business, from a principle of conscience; and make it the daily subject of your prayer to God, that he would either keep you from the shame of poverty, or at least from the sin of it. Take notice of every step of his providence, whether of mercy or trial. Let the aspect of providence direct your exercise, and quicken your affections in religious duties; and take such views of the fulness of an all-sufficient God, in acts of worship, as may prepare you for every event of providence, whether prosperous or adverse.

Thus, my brethren, I have now finished what I proposed, in the way of advices; and for what I have to say with regard to the present dispensation of providence, that puts an end to my ministry among you, I shall bring it within very narrow bounds. It were

eaſy, by ſaying a few words, to move the concern both of ſpeaker and hearers: this I have hitherto choſen to avoid; and, therefore, ſhall only ſay, that I am deeply ſenſible of the affection and duty of the congregation that attended my miniſtry, and others under my charge. I cannot expreſs my ſenſe of it better, than in the words of the late eminently pious Doctor Finlay, my immediate predeceſſor in this new office, who, on his death-bed, ſaid to thoſe about him, "I owe a long catalogue of debts to my friends, which will not be put to my charge; but I hope God will diſcharge them for me." I cannot now do any thing better for you, than again to beſeech you, to remember and put in practice the directions I have given you, and, I am perſuaded, that it ſhall go well with you. The only farther requeſt I have to make to you is, that you would give to me, and my family, an intereſt in your prayers. Intreat of God, that we may be preſerved from perils and dangers, and carried to the place of our deſtination in ſafety; and that I may be aſſiſted of him in every future duty, and not fall under the terrible reproach, of agreeing to make ſo diſtant a removal, and then being found unfit for the important taſk. I conclude with the words of the apoſtle Jude, 24, 25. "Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wiſe God, our Saviour, be glory and majeſty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

END OF VOL. III.

JOHN TURNBULL, Printer.

This Volume belonged to the Library of the late Rev. David Welsh, D.D., *which was purchased and presented to the Library of the New College by a number of his friends and admirers, as a mark of respect to his memory.*